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Eschatology in Galatians

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Eschatology in Galatians

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Abstract

The dissertation examines the theme of eschatology in Galatians. Its main thesis is that the letter reveals a distinctively future eschatological concern instead of a structure of realized eschatology as is widely thought.

Abstaining from hazarding yet another historical reconstruction, the study focuses on Paul's own words about the Galatian crisis, discovering two important points. First, the problem to which Paul's argument responds is the apostasy of the Galatians, which renders the letter as Paul's pastoral engagement with his backsliding Galatians, not a theological debate with his opponents. Second, Paul perceives this crisis with a strong future eschatological concern, considering their behaviour as an act which puts their future in jeopardy (chapter two).

Building on these contextual observations, the study argues that the same future eschatological concern dominates Paul's theological argument too. Several major proposals are made in this respect. First, unlike in Romans, justification in Galatians remains a future hope (chapter three). Second, sonship is not a major theme but a median motif serving Paul's emphasis on heirship and inheritance (chapter four). Third, the idea of 'fulfilled promise' or 'realized inheritance' is not found in Galatians (chapter five). Fourth, like justification, the inheritance also converges with the Kingdom of God and eternal life as epithets of final salvation (chapter six). Fifth, Paul's interpretation of the Christ event, without signalling a realized eschatological interest, serves to bring out the importance the Spirit (chapter seven).

With this future eschatological concern and the essentially moral nature of the crisis (apostasy) to which the letter responds, Paul's urgent concern that runs throughout his argument, both the theological and the ethical, shows itself: 'Return to your life in the Spirit, which is the only way to the hope of salvation!' (chapter eight).

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SOLI DEO GLORIA.

Abbreviations

The abbreviations used in this thesis follow the conventions of *JBL*, *NTS* and *CBQ*. In the notes a short title and year are given; full titles are available in the bibliography at the end. Where the name of an author is given without a short title, the reference is to that author's commentary on Galatians. For commentaries on other books of the Scripture both author and a short title are given.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. The task

Paul's letter to the Galatians continues to attract lively scholarly interest.¹ This is hardly surprising since this relatively short letter contains much valuable information about Paul and the early church and presents many fascinating issues for historians and for theologians. It is therefore this letter that often provides a crucial test case for students of earliest Christianity. It is not an exaggeration to say that one cannot speak adequately about Paul and early Christianity without first making one's mind up about Galatians.² So the stakes are high and discussion is intensive. This being so, it is also quite rare to find a happy consensus on most issues that concern the letter.

There is, however, one major exception: most scholars accept that there is 'a structure of realized eschatology' in Galatians.³ Here two claims are involved. First, Paul's logic is an 'eschatological' one; to understand Paul is to grasp this fundamentally eschatological way of thinking undergirding Paul's argument in the letter.⁴ Secondly, it is a 'realized' eschatology. In Galatians it is this aspect of

¹ Major recent studies include Dunn, *Theology* (1993) and *Galatians* (1993); Hong, *Law* (1993); Hanson, *Galatians* (1994); Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996); Williams, *Galatians* (1997); Martyn, *Issues* (1997) and *Galatians* (1997); Witherington, *Grace* (1998, commentary); Esler, *Galatians* (1998); B. Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998); Smiles, *Gospel* (1998); Kern, *Rhetoric* (1998); Choi, 'Spirit' (1998, Ph. D. thesis, Denver-Iliff).

² Good illustrations can be found in the theories of Beker, Martyn, Sanders and Dunn.

³ Beker, *Paul* (1980) 98-99. See e.g., Marshall, 'Eschatology' (1997) 49; Longenecker lxxxvii-lxxxviii; Barclay, *Obedience* (1988) 100; Meeks, 'Apocalyptic' (1982) 695. In the present study we use the term 'realized eschatology' loosely to denote an emphasis on the realized aspect of salvation. Thus, our use of the term is different from the more technical use of it by Dodd.

⁴ One thinks of such influential studies as Schweitzer, *Mysticism* (1930); Vos, *Eschatology* (1930); Schoeps, *Paul* (1961); Davies, *Rabbinic* (1948); Ridderbos, *Outline* (1975); Furnish, *Theology* (1968).

‘already’ that carries the sharpest edge of Paul’s polemic.⁵ To exaggerate a little, to understand Paul’s argument in Galatians is to grasp its realized eschatological structure.⁶

Is this consensus, which seems so obvious to most interpreters, a well-founded one? Or is it possible that it is the result of repeated assertion which nevertheless lacks real evidence? Indeed, scholars usually agree on a certain issue because the relevant data is so clear as not to allow any other interpretation. Unfortunately, however, this is not always the case. Not infrequently, scholarly consensus involves more than disinterested exegesis, as the story of the king’s ‘transparent’ robe reminds us. It is for this reason that once in a while we need to hear the cry of a boy who clearly *sees* the naked body of the king, but not the wonderful robe he *is supposed to see*. The present study is our attempt to express such a boyish cry about the ‘robe’ of Paul’s ‘realized eschatology’ in Galatians, with the conviction that there is indeed good reason to question its reality.

2. Ways of reading the Galatian eschatology

Our initial question is simple: granted, for the time being, a realized eschatology in chapters three and four of the letter, what about the strong future eschatology in which Paul couches his ethical instructions (5:5, 21b; 6:7-9)? If realized eschatology is indeed Paul’s main focus, why does he perplex us by making such remarks which almost contradict his earlier viewpoint? What then should we do with these troublesome remarks?

⁵ Scholars disagree over the nature and extent of this ‘fulfilment’.

⁶ Even those who take Paul’s main concern to be the ‘ongoing’ aspect of Christian life think that the ‘already’ of the ‘getting in’ forms the essential ground for Paul’s thesis.

We begin our study with a brief overview of the scholarly treatment of the subject with the goal of demonstrating that *Paul's eschatology in Galatians has not yet been adequately accounted for*. Being a virtual consensus, eschatology has seldom been a major topic in scholarly discussion, which renders a systematic review of the subject difficult. We divide our survey into three major groups: 1) a mainly realized eschatology; 2) the eschatological tension between 'already and not yet'; 3) future eschatology. In addition to these, we shall also take a look at the view of Betz about future eschatological justification. This grouping is, of course, somewhat artificial, but our purpose is not so much to discuss who says what as to discern major ways of construing Paul's eschatology in Galatians in preparation for the presentation of our own reading. Since eschatology is intrinsically related to ethics, and in turn, to the larger issue of the structure of the letter, we will also be paying some attention to how successful each approach is in making a coherent case out of Paul's argument as a whole.

A fully realized eschatology

Since most scholars seem to belong to this position, a long discussion is not necessary. What follows is therefore a brief analysis of major lines of approach within it with special reference to their implications for understanding the eschatological structure of the letter.

Traditional approach

An obvious starting point is the 'traditional' reading of the letter in which Paul's doctrine of justification is understood as his attempt to thwart the 'legalistic' attitude

of ‘justification by works of the law’. Burton⁷ provides a good account of this view. For him, the letter concerns whether the Gentiles should receive circumcision or not in order to gain ‘membership’ of the covenant people and salvation (lvii). Paul rejects this legalistic view of his opponents by claiming that justification is only in Christ and by faith. Paul’s main contention is, of course, that this legalistic ‘works of the law’ can never be proper ground for God’s acceptance. Yet Paul’s argument also carries a strong *a posteriori* polemic. Namely, Paul falsifies justification by the law on the basis of the *factual reality*⁸ of justification by faith: the very fact that Christ actually died (2:21), which marked the revelation of God’s righteousness, requires that faith in this crucified Christ has to be the only way of justification and that the law-righteousness is a blind alley (141).

Paul’s scriptural argument is also read in the same light. What is crucial for him is, of course, the Galatians’ actual experience of the Spirit by faith and without the law. Taking ‘the promise of the Spirit’ (3:14) as the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise which dominates much of Paul’s discussion in chapters three and four, Burton thinks that Paul presses his point of ‘by faith’ on the ground of the actual realization of the promised inheritance, namely, in the form of the Spirit. Paul rejects the demand of circumcision as the condition of becoming children of Abraham by affirming that the Galatians are already sons of Abraham by their faith in Christ. By stressing the ‘realized’ nature of Christian life, then, ‘[t]he appeal of the apostle is to retain the status they already possess’ (225). Throughout, Paul’s thought is ‘concentrated on the way of acceptance with God in the *present* life’, and naturally, ‘eschatological references are few and indirect’ (15, emphasis added).

⁷ *Galatians* (1921).

⁸ This reality is interpreted either forensically or ethically. For the more recent ‘apocalyptic’ approach, see below.

This does not mean that the element of ‘not yet’ is completely denied.⁹ The trouble is, however, that, though acknowledged, it simply remains *inconsequential* for Paul’s *main* argument. We are not told how it can be understood as part of Paul’s response to the crisis without hampering its neat realized eschatological framework.¹⁰ Given this rather disruptive nature of future eschatology, it is not surprising that some scholars, such as Eckstein,¹¹ come up with a much neater version of realized eschatology, denying *any* relevance of future eschatology for Paul’s argument. For him, even the ‘hope of righteousness’ (5:5) does not refer to future justification but the hope *present* justification bestows on those justified (247). He too acknowledges that believers’ perseverance will prove ‘meaningful in the end’ and ‘surely be rewarded’. But the sharp teleological edge in Paul’s words is carefully blunted so as not to disrupt the emphatically realized thrust (251). ‘[D]ie eschatologische Spannung’, Eckstein unequivocally concludes, ‘spielt in der konkreten galatischen Kontroverse keine Rolle’ (118).

Sociological readings

The traditional reading of the letter has presently been under heavy attack, especially since the publication in 1977 of E. P. Sanders’s major book.¹² Many scholars, with various degree of modification, still continue to hold this traditional understanding,¹³

⁹ Burton acknowledges future justification and the necessity of proper obedience. Compare 471 and 278; 311-2. Duncan’s more Lutheran reading also allows the element of ‘not yet’.

¹⁰ Such silence is typical of many scholarly interpretations, e.g., Hendriksen; Guthrie; Bruce; Hübner, *Law* (1984); Smiles, *Gospel* (1998); Schreiner, *Law* (1993).

¹¹ *Verheißung* (1996).

¹² *Palestinian* (1977) and *Law* (1983). For reviews, see Neusner, ‘Comparing’ (1978) 177-191; Best, ‘E. P. Sanders’ (1982) 65-74. Sanders joins an already growing momentum. E.g., Stendahl, *Paul* (1976).

¹³ See, e.g., Hübner, *Law* (1984); Kim, *Origin* (1984); Westerholm, *Law* (1988); Thielman, *From Plight* (1989); idem, *Law* (1994); Laato, *Law* (1995); Hagner, ‘Jewish Matrix’ (1993); Gundry, ‘Grace’ (1985); Stanton, ‘Law’ (1996).

but different ways of resolving the tension are vigorously sought, most noticeably in terms of sociology and eschatology. Without doubt, one of the mounting concerns since Sanders is the problem of relating Paul's criticisms of the law to the 'covenantal nomism' that Sanders describes. What is relevant for us here is the fact that these trends do not seem to help to appreciate future eschatology in Galatians. While the notion of 'legalism' is seriously questioned, its basic, realized eschatological, framework goes almost unchallenged.

In recent years, the sociological dimension of Paul's argument has attracted growing scholarly interest.¹⁴ Being sociological, attention is necessarily focused on the *present*, allowing little room for the future dimension of Paul's polemic. Watson¹⁵ provides a good example. Failing to find any 'theological' ground for Paul's rejection of the law (64), Watson takes it to be a sociological call for 'separation from the Jewish community'. 'Paul's use of an antithesis asserts the separation of church from synagogue, but does not explain theologically why such a separation is necessary' (69). For the Gentiles justification by works of the law means 'entry into the Jewish people', which is wrong 'for that reason alone' (69).¹⁶ Paul's polemic in Galatians is manifestly a *sociological* one on which his theological conviction has no bearing at all. Naturally, Watson practically passes over the whole issues of eschatology and ethics, together with the role of the Spirit which forms the spine of Paul's argument (3:2-5; 4:21-31; 5:16-26; 6:7-9).

¹⁴ The prevalence of such motifs as 'identity', 'inclusion', 'unity', 'equality', 'openness', 'separation' and 'boundary' illustrates this trend.

¹⁵ *Paul* (1986).

¹⁶ Italic is removed in the last quote. Here he cites Sanders, *Palestinian* (1977) 552: 'In short, this is what Paul finds wrong with Judaism: it is not Christianity'.

Barclay¹⁷ does view ethics as an integral part of Paul's polemic. With the convenient scheme of 'identity' and 'pattern of behaviour', he competently demonstrates how Paul's theological argument 'points toward and requires the moral instruction at the end of the letter' (77-105, here 105) which, as the 'necessary consequence' of identity, describes 'how the members of God's people should live' (217). What is puzzling for us here is that, while ethics is well anticipated by Paul's discussion of identity, its futuristic framework is neither 'anticipated' nor 'necessitated' by it. This is inevitable, since Barclay takes Paul's theological argument about 'realized identity' and explain ethics in that particular light rather than the 'not yet' of future salvation.¹⁸ After all, he too agrees with Beker and Martyn that 'Galatians does not match the other apocalyptic Pauline letters' in its lack of 'the near-expectation of the end' (100). Ethics is well integrated into the scheme, but future eschatology still does not find any role to play, even in what is arguably one of the most successful attempts to interpret the letter as a unified argument.

Esler's reading in terms of a social anthropological theory of identity¹⁹ seems more successful in accounting for the role of ethics and eschatology, in that both are now taken up as 'aspects of a much larger reality called identity' (172, 217). Esler reminds us, quite legitimately, that 'a group's sense of their destiny, of where they are headed, can constitute an important part of their sense of who they are', since 'identity' has 'both a present and future dimension' (175, 233). From this he further claims that such an identity-generating function is the *main* purpose behind Paul's talk

¹⁷ *Obedying* (1988). Unlike Watson, his *main* concern is theological. R. Longenecker's 'legalism and libertinism' resembles Barclay's scheme. See also Matera, 'Culmination' (1988) 85; Gaventa, 'Singularity' (1991) 149: 'a new identity in Christ' and 'new life in the Spirit'; Hong, *Law* (1993); Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 367-471.

¹⁸ See 90, 91-92, 95, 96-97. This is much more explicit in Esler. See below.

¹⁹ *Galatians* (1998). Cf. his own summary in 'Social Identity' (1998). See also 'Reading' (1996), 215-240 and 'Family Imagery' (1997) 121-149.

of future salvation (233).²⁰ Here the domestication of *future* eschatology into the concept of *present* identity, already visible in Barclay, becomes unmistakable.

However, this is the answer Esler gets from his theory and not from his actual reading of Paul's argument.²¹

It is not that these interpreters argue for a realized eschatology. They explicitly affirm the future dimension of Paul's theology together with the necessity of proper conduct for end-time salvation (6:7-8).²² As in Burton, however, this recognition is *irrelevant* for their readings of Paul's polemic itself, which is the inevitable consequence of their sociological orientation. But the future eschatological thrust is clearly there in the letter (5:5, 21b; 6:7-9), and one cannot help feeling that too much is left unexplained for their sociological construals of Paul's argument to be persuasive.

The problem of these sociological readings with future eschatological motifs in the letter becomes very illuminating in Sanders.²³ Calling Paul's justification language a 'transfer terminology',²⁴ he claims that the issue in Galatians is not the condition the Gentiles must meet to be 'saved'/'justified' at the Judgement but to enter the people of God,²⁵ namely, to become true 'sons of Abraham'. 'Justification', 'freedom from

²⁰ Meeks, 'Apocalyptic' (1982), speaking of the function of the motif, anticipates the full-blown study of Esler.

²¹ Wearing the methodological glasses of 'identity', Esler sees *everything* in Galatians in that particular light, thereby creating the impression that Galatians is about identity. What really happens is, however, that Galatians is neatly tailored into the ready-made straightjacket of 'identity'. For a telling criticism, see the review by Bornington (1999), especially 144-45.

²² See, e.g., Watson, *Paul* (1986) 64-5; cf. 119-21, 148, 159; Barclay, *Obedience* (1988) 165, 227, 230: 'it was not just a matter of what God *had* done...but what he *continued* to do in and for the believer' (227). Here we observe a 'theo-logical' turn in his language, which becomes strategic for an 'eschatological' or 'apocalyptic' reading of Paul. See the next section.

²³ Law (1983), an exegetical substantiation of his view suggested in *Palestinian* (1977), and *Paul* (1991). With varied nuance, the term 'identity' is currently in vogue among Pauline scholars. Cf. Wilckens, *Rechtfertigung* (1974) 132; Davies, 'People of Israel' (1977) 10.

²⁴ *Palestinians* (1977) 470-72, 501, 544. Cf. 491-5; Law (1983) 5-10.

²⁵ Law (1983) 18, 20; *Paul* (1991) 50. The point is, no doubt, to eliminate *soteriological* connotation.

the law' and 'receiving the Spirit' all deal with this issue of 'getting in'.²⁶ Paul's case is clear: by believing in Christ, Gentile converts have already become proper members of God's people. This does not mean that Sanders denies future salvation in Paul.²⁷ It simply is not the issue in Galatians, which is only about the *initial entry*.²⁸ Naturally, 'Galatians is remarkable for the relative absence of end-time language, but the ruling topic of chapter three is how to become a descendant of Abraham...'²⁹

Yet Sanders *does* notice the motifs of future salvation (5:5) and explains that initial entry matters as the 'precondition of end-time salvation' supported by 'the unspoken assumption that the true descendants of Abraham will be saved'. Ultimately, then, Galatians is about 'how to enter the body of those who would be saved'.³⁰ The strategic split between 'getting in' and 'staying in' has then proved rather artificial from the first,³¹ as well as his talk of 'entry' as the subject of the letter.

Eschatological readings

Another major way of explaining Paul's polemic against the law is to resort to Paul's realized eschatological convictions: the coming of Christ has established a new era and thereby rendered the law obsolete. This approach is often combined with a strong christological³² or theocentric³³ orientation. An obvious merit of this perspective is

²⁶ Law (1983), 52 n. 20. The intention of Sanders is clear: since Paul's polemic is not against 'works-righteousness', 'the quality and character of Judaism are not in view' (19). Throughout his discussion, Sanders takes issue with Hübner.

²⁷ *Palestinian* (1979) 441-42, 515-18; *Paul* (1991) 21-22, 26-33.

²⁸ Law (1983) 20 (emphasis original).

²⁹ Law (1983) 46.

³⁰ Law (1983) 45-46; *Paul* (1991) 59.

³¹ Moo, 'Law' (1987) 292; Stanton, 'Law of Moses' (1996) 105.

³² The 'sacramental' reading of Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982) is a prominent case in point (e.g., 197). See also Campbell, 'Coming' (1999).

³³ B. Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) gives a 'realized eschatological' reading in which he combines a strong theocentric perspective (35-67) with an equally strong emphasis on morality (69-88; 147-171).

that, like the sociological one, it provides an attractive way out from the difficulty of explaining Paul's polemic against the law. By focusing on the eschatological decisiveness of Christ, one can render the law 'obsolete' without actually having to criticize it.³⁴

Beker³⁵ provides an ironic example of this approach. Despite his emphasis on 'future apocalyptic'³⁶ as the core of Paul's gospel, Beker fails to make Galatians support his case and admits that the letter 'almost presents us with a "realised eschatology", since the fullness of eschatological reality coincides with the Christ-event' (98-99).

Indeed the eschatological present dominates the letter, for the crisis situation demands the either/or of bondage under the law or freedom in Christ. And this either/or is so centrally grounded in the death of Christ as the annulment of slavery under the Torah (Gal 2.19-21; 3:1, 12-14; 4:5; 6:14) that the apocalyptic future with its basis in the resurrection of Christ does not receive its proper emphasis.... Indeed, *if we ignore the future apocalyptic hints in Galatians*, the letter can be easily interpreted as a document of realized eschatology' (58).³⁷

³⁴ See McLean, *Curse* (1996) 113-19; Davies, 'Pitfall' (1982) 4-16; Barclay, *Obedying* (1988) 240. The solution is, however, more apparent than real since eschatological logic alone is in reality nothing but a chronological variant of Sanders; 'because it is *not* Christianity' is simply turned into 'because it is *before* Christianity'.

³⁵ *Paul* (1980).

³⁶ After Schweitzer, Käsemann has been most influential in spreading the 'apocalyptic' Paul. 'Apocalyptic' in *Questions* (1969) 108-137. Cf. *Perspectives* (1971).

Despite its popularity, the term 'apocalyptic' is fraught with ambiguity. Inevitably, each interpreter gives the term his/her own definition. Using the same term does not prevent interpreters from subscribing to widely different views (cf. the 'future apocalyptic' of Käsemann and Beker vs. Martyn's 'realized, cruciform apocalyptic') and using different terms does not necessarily mean that their views differ (cf. B. Longenecker's 'eschatological' view shares much of the 'apocalyptic' views of Beker and Martyn). This state of affairs renders the value of the term questionable. See Stanton's review of Martyn's commentary. An excellent critical review of the ways in which major interpreters use the term for their own theological programs is available in Matlock, *Unveiling* (1996).

³⁷ Italics added. For Beker, the dictation of the situation makes Galatians 'a first-level polemical response' and not 'a second-level dogmatic proposition': Paul's logic is 'cryptic, intuitive, and often inconsistent', with no 'fundamentally consistent picture' emerging. Since 'the Christocentric focus of Galatians pushes Paul's theocentric apocalyptic theme to the periphery', 'Galatians cannot serve as the central and normative guide for all Paul's letters and theology', because it is utterly 'contingent'. Thus, by exaggerating the contingency of Galatians Beker minimizes its negative impact for his thesis of (future) 'apocalyptic Paul'. Here we see how his hermeneutical scheme of 'coherence and contingency' serves his case.

The point is clear, but a question immediately pops up: how can a fundamentally realized eschatological perspective accommodate at the same time an equally unambiguous note of future eschatology?

An easy way out is to excise the disturbing part. So Beker says, that Galatians will present a neatly realized eschatology 'if we ignore the future apocalyptic hints in Galatians'. B. Longenecker, like many others,³⁸ takes this route. His silence on future eschatology is made more poignant by his uncompromising emphasis on morality as part of salvation itself.³⁹ As with Barclay, morality is understood as a 'demonstration' of God's established triumph in Christ rather than as the precondition of God's future salvation. As in the sociological approach, however, the problem of expurgation is too obvious to ignore.

However, there is another problem of confusing the category between theology or christology and anthropology. How does the announcement of God's accomplished triumph relate to the contingency of human life which is far from complete? More specifically, how does the talk of *God's* triumph serve as an effective response to the problem of *human* backsliding? Martyn illustrates this problem most clearly.

Martyn puts a strong emphasis on the realized eschatological thrust of Galatians: 'Paul speaks of our redemption as an accomplished fact, giving no indication that any aspect of it is as yet incomplete' (90). This note of 'already' concerns God's victory,

³⁸ See e.g., Barclay, *Obedying* (1988) 102-3; Keck, *Letters* (1988) 72-73; Hong, *Law* (1993) 27, 76-78, 88-89; *idem*, 'Perspective' (1991) 1-16; Wright, 'Gospel' (1994); Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 73-4, 142-146, 182, 217.

³⁹ B. Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998). A case in point is his heavy use of 5:6 ('faith active through love') in contrast to his complete silence on 5:5 despite the explicit connection between the two.

which is, of course, grounded on the cross of Christ, the ‘centerpiece’ of God’s rectifying apocalypse.⁴⁰ The thrust of Paul’s argument is clear:

There was a “before,” the time when we were confined, imprisoned; and there is an “after,” the time of our deliverance. And the difference between the two is caused...by the coming of Christ and his Spirit. ... In a significant sense, the time of cosmic enslavement is now past, and *its being past is a central motif of the entire letter* (99).⁴¹

With God’s redemptive work already accomplished, ‘the turn of the ages is no longer ... an event in the future’ (101). What Paul proclaims in Galatians then is the indicative truth of ‘God has done it!’ (103).⁴²

Martyn is not, however, oblivious to the consummation in the future. He is, as Sanders, sensitive enough to be surprised at the futuristic note Paul frequently strikes (550). He even says that ‘Christian life is essentially oriented to the future, being determined by Christ’s future no less than by his past’ (*Issues* 65). How then is God’s ‘already’ combined with future ‘consummation’? Is it just a matter of time, with no human contingency, not even apostasy, ever affecting the final result? Martyn sums up the matter in this way: ‘God’s rectification in Christ is *accomplished*’ but still ‘*remains under attack*’ by the enslaving flesh. ‘God’s rectification is therefore consistently *to be lived out*’, continuously ‘*finding its concrete form* in the daily life of the church’ (478-79).

Here Martyn becomes quite dialectical. A rectification at once accomplished and yet to be lived out, already accomplished but still to find its concrete form, is not easy to swallow. Further still, God’s ‘powerful’ rectification that is at once completed and

⁴⁰ This notion of *cruciform* apocalyptic constitutes one of the most crucial aspects of Martyn’s ‘apocalyptic’ reading of Paul, generating a framework of realized eschatology with the note of absolute disjuncture from the past. For his view of ‘apocalyptic’ see Martyn 38-39, 97-105, 163-67, 263-275; *Issues* (1997) 77-84, 141-56, 279-97. See also his ‘Events’ (1991) 166 n. 2, 179. Also see the evaluation in Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 5-8.

⁴¹ Emphasis added. Similarly, Bornkamm, ‘Revelation’ (1974) 95.

⁴² See also 104, 275, 475; *Issues* (1997) 64-65; cf. 279-297.

yet still under attack also puzzles us.⁴³ Martyn's point is that *God's* accomplished rectification expresses itself in the life of *believers*. It is precisely at this *anthropological* turn that his *theo-logical* and *christological* affirmation of 'already' falters, since the contingency of human obedience, as well as God's judgment, still remains (498, 479). Of course, God's triumph is not doubted, but the Galatians' participation in it, which depends on their obedience, remains an open question. Indeed, it seems to be this human problem that reduces Paul to such desperate measures as we see in Galatians.

Hence one-sided focus on God's faithfulness does not seem to take us very far. After all, Martyn returns to the position he himself criticizes: justification is 'to be had on earth only as a pledged gift, always subject to attack, always to be authenticated in practice – a matter of *promise* and *expectation*' (479).⁴⁴ 'God has done it!' turns out to be 'God has given the promise!' This is a practical recantation of his earlier affirmations. Once we take future eschatology into account, there does not seem to be an adequate way of construing Paul's argument within the structure of realized eschatology.

⁴³ Cf. B. Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 77: 'To promote "works of law" is to incorporate matters of the flesh into the gospel, thereby *stripping it of the power of the sovereign God* who brings into existence a united community transformed into the image of the self-giving Christ' (italics added). If one turns Paul's talk of human behaviour into the theocentric talk about God's victory, the Galatians' present disobedience is also elevated to an effective threat to God's powerful activity, damaging 'God's reputation' (cf. 46). Is this what Paul means?

⁴⁴ He is quoting Käsemann, 'Righteousness' in *Questions* (1969) 168-182 (170). See his critique of Käsemann's *futuristic* definition of 'apocalyptic' in *Issues* (1997) 112.

Eschatological 'already and not yet'

The future eschatological thrust of Paul's argument fares much better in the widely held scheme of the eschatological 'already and not yet'.⁴⁵ Dunn is an eloquent voice for this position. Informed by Sanders's view of Judaism but critical of his failure to relate it adequately to Paul, Dunn⁴⁶ proposes that the issue in Galatians is 'staying in' - whether the Gentiles, having already claimed a share in God's covenant, still need the law in order to *sustain* that claim.⁴⁷ The 'works of the law' are not entrance requirements but 'the first act of covenantal nomism'.⁴⁸ Naturally, justification, the central theme of the letter, does not mean 'initial acceptance into the covenant' (*pace* Sanders) but 'God's acknowledgement that someone is in the covenant', whether 'initial', 'repeated' or 'final',⁴⁹ covering 'a sustained relationship with God'. By 'justification by faith' Paul then means that 'as their initial acceptance by God was through faith, so is their continuation and their final acceptance (Gal 5.5)'.⁵⁰

Into this framework of 'covenantal nomism' Dunn gathers both 'already' and 'not yet'.⁵¹ On the one hand, having 'already experienced' the Spirit, the eschatological fulfilment of the promise and hope (3:14), the Galatians have been 'fully accepted by God and did not fall short in any degree in their standing before him' (154, 156). Having begun 'by faith', the status of the Galatians is complete and sufficient. Yet, the 'already' of faith is not intended to press a 'realized eschatology' but to show how

⁴⁵ To various degrees, this seems the most widespread way of reading Paul's eschatology. Hester, *Inheritance* (1968); 'Heilsgeschichte' (1967) presents such a view with the concept of inheritance and Byrne, *Sons* (1978) 141-190 with sonship and freedom.

⁴⁶ Useful reviews of Dunn's view of Paul include Silva, 'Synthesis' (1991) 339-53; Hagner, 'Jewish Matrix' (1993) 111-130.

⁴⁷ 'Theology' (1991) 130. Cf. Gundry, 'Grace' (1985); Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 24.

⁴⁸ 'Theology' (1991) 130-131; *Theology* (1993) 103.

⁴⁹ 134-45, 148; *Law* (1990) 190. Here Dunn depends heavily on his view of the Antioch incident. See *Law* (1990) 129-182, 183-214.

⁵⁰ 139-140, 155-158; 264-272; *Law* (1990) 208, 209.

⁵¹ This works on two levels: within individual concepts (such as justification and inheritance) and within the structure of the letter.

to work out such a beginning in the ongoing life of ‘not yet’ until the day of final justification, the full realization of the ‘promise’ and ‘inheritance’. Of course, ‘how they began’ continues to be determinative also for their ongoing life. “‘By the Spirit, from faith’” continued to be the basis, primary and sufficient, so long as that hope lay before them yet to be fully realized; to think that this hope could be realized or made more certain in terms of the flesh was to destroy that whole basis’ (269-70). Paul’s *main* concern is this ‘second’, ongoing and eschatological phase. Paul’s statement in 3:3 sums up the whole point: since they have begun with the Spirit, they also have to finish with the Spirit (3:3).

The thrust of ‘not yet’ becomes even stronger in Witherington.⁵² Like Dunn, he too takes the issue in Galatians not to be ‘getting in’ but ‘going on’,⁵³ making ‘life in the Spirit’ in chapters five and six the main subject of the letter. Of course, for Witherington too chapters three and four deal with initial entry, with unequivocal emphasis on the fulfilled promise and realized inheritance in the form of the Spirit. As in Dunn, however, this is only a preliminary step, clarifying that ‘precisely because they did not come to be in Christ by obeying the law..., they should not now add obedience to the law to their faith in Christ’ (174).⁵⁴

In Witherington, together with his emphasis on ethics, the future eschatological thrust takes on much greater prominence, for the simple reason that life in the Spirit necessarily ‘affects their eternal status and reward’ (432).⁵⁵ Chapters three and four are still read in terms of a realized eschatology but now the real issue becomes

⁵² His commentary, *Grace* (1998).

⁵³ Instead of redefining justification in terms of covenantal nomism, he relegates it to a subsidiary place as Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) does. See n. 1 in chapter three.

⁵⁴ The ethical section, building upon the ‘theological rationale’ in chapters three and four, forms ‘a crucial part of the argument’. See 25, 193, 217, 360-61. Cf. Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 385.

⁵⁵ At this point, he differs from Barclay and B. Longenecker who deal with ethics in the light of ‘realized identity’.

whether they should live by works of law or by faith ‘in order to gain the final salvation or acquittal of God in the future’. The question of final justification thus ‘gets at the heart of the problem in Galatia’. Paul’s point is that obedience to the law is ‘neither necessary nor beneficial ... if the goal is justification before God or at the final judgment’(184, 369).

The merit of this position is obvious: at least we do not have the problem of undue selectivity; Paul’s ethical emphasis and its future eschatological thrust have both been fully appreciated. Is this then the most plausible way of interpreting the letter? There are, however, questions to be answered.

An obvious problem is that the covenantal nomistic logic discerned by Dunn and Witherington is not very plausible: *as you have begun with faith and the Spirit, so you have to go on in the same way.*⁵⁶ For one thing, Paul never presses this point; it has to be *inferred* by the Galatians. Yet, persuaded by the agitators, the Galatians are presently drawing precisely the opposite inference: as you have begun well by faith, now you need to continue by works of the law! Is Paul then just reiterating the ‘common ground’ without ever getting to his disputed point?⁵⁷ Why is Paul so reticent about his main point? In addition, it also strikes us as very strange that Paul spends no less than two closely argued chapters (three and four) just to make a preliminary point. Paul’s tone in chapters three and four seems too final to be merely preparatory.

Another problem is the juxtaposition of an emphatic ‘already’ and an equally strong ‘not yet’ within a single argument. For example, Dunn says that with the coming of the Spirit, ‘the hope of Israel’ is already fulfilled and thus, the promised

⁵⁶ If one construes chapters three and four as concerning the ‘beginning’, while taking the main issue as the ‘ongoing’, this seems the only way of connecting the two.

⁵⁷ 3:3 is the only possible evidence for such logic, but, as 3:5 suggests, the intended contrast is between ‘works of the law’ and ‘faith’, not between ‘beginning’ and ‘ongoing’. See our discussion of the passage in 2.3.

inheritance is already given. The Galatians are '*fully* accepted' by God. Nevertheless, there is a hope 'yet to be *fully* realized', a belief which constitutes a 'common ground' in Galatia (269). But how can an emphatic 'already' go hand in hand with an equally unequivocal 'not yet'? If justification is still outstanding with ongoing obedience as its condition, the claim of full acceptance is certainly claiming too much.

We have to remember that in Galatians we are not dealing with a *summa theologia* of Paul himself in which he gives a well-balanced account of his eschatology but a polemic drawn up to deal with a concrete problem. And it is very difficult, if not impossible, to imagine that Paul claims both 'already' and 'not yet' in the same breath in a writing as polemical as Galatians. An emphatic 'already' works precisely on the basis of its denial of 'not yet'. By the same token, an unequivocal recognition of 'not yet' necessarily renders any claim of 'already' illusory. The framework of 'already and not yet', which may be appropriate as a synthetic scheme devised to gather diverse materials in Paul's letters into a coherent whole, falls short of an adequate explanation of a polemical argument. The urgent situation in Galatia seems to require a more unified perspective.

Libertinism and Paul's future eschatology

A few scholars have paid special attention to chapters five and six taking them as the key to Paul's response to the Galatian crisis. Lütgert and Ropes proposed the well-known 'two-front' theory.⁵⁸ Schmithals went further and suggested a 'Gnostics' theory, dismissing chapters 3-4 as irrelevant to the Galatian crisis.⁵⁹ Crownfield proposed a sort of compromise describing the agitators as 'Jewish syncretists'.⁶⁰ Yet

⁵⁸ Lütgert, *Gesetz* (1919); Ropes, *Singular* (1929).

⁵⁹ Schmithals, *Gnostics* (1972) 13-64.

⁶⁰ Crownfield, 'Singular' (1945) 491-500.

for these scholars the clearly future eschatological thrust of Paul's ethical talk does not make any contribution to reconstructing Paul's argument. It is Jewett⁶¹ who, building on these earlier studies, takes the eschatological 'not yet' fully into account.

Jewett, acknowledging both the nomistic threat (3:6-4:30) and the libertineistic problems (5:13-6:10), tries to explain them in relation to the Galatians' 'Hellenistic assumptions' which are 'as susceptible to the propaganda of the agitators as to the lures of libertinism' (209). Concerning the former, however, the judaizers did not sell their nomism as it really was but in the name of Hellenistic religiosity. That is, promoting circumcision and cultic calendar as means of gaining 'the final level of perfection', the agitators exploited the Galatians' propensity for mystery and perfection which is 'not nomistic at all' (212). They used such 'cunningly devised tactics' which are 'far from orthodox' (206-8) since they needed 'quick and observable results' to thwart persecution by the Zealots. It is *Paul* who construes the crisis in terms of 'nomism'.

The Galatians' Hellenistic religiosity is also crucial for Paul's anti-libertinistic polemic in chapters five and six. Apart from the nomistic threat, the Galatians are from the first 'pneumatic libertinitists', sharing a typical enthusiastic misunderstanding of the Spirit. They took the Spirit as a 'self-sufficient circle' granting immediate immortality and salvation 'rather than a path leading to the parousia' (3:2-5, 14). This led them into 'a disregard for ethical distinctions' and 'the scornful rejection of the impending future judgment', coupled with 'an intensely proud spiritual self-consciousness'. Countering such a tendency, in 5:13-6:10 Paul emphasizes the 'normative function of the Spirit' and utters solemn warnings about the last judgment and individuals' moral accountability before God (5:10; 6:7-8) (210-12). In sum, it is

⁶¹ 'Agitators' (1971).

the Galatians' 'Hellenistic assumption' that lies behind both problems of Jewish nomism and their libertinism.

The merit of Jewett's reading is that he takes Paul's ethical discourse seriously as a major part of Paul's response to the crisis. Considering the 'libertine' problem as the heart of the matter, he sensitively follows the relentless thrust of Paul's moral warnings. The explicitly future eschatological thrust of Paul's argument, which is all too often neglected or put into interpreters' procrustean beds of various kinds, exerts its full force.

Nevertheless, Jewett's claim that the Galatians' libertinism is based on their mistaken experience of the Spirit fails to be convincing. Paul's discussion of the Spirit throughout chapters three and four does not show any hint that he is correcting such a mistaken view of the Spirit.⁶² Such an assumption also flies in the face of Paul's highly positive view of the Galatians' 'life in the Spirit' before the arrival of the agitators (5:7). His view that the Galatians repudiated the Judgement also reads too much into Paul's polemic (cf. 1 Th 1:9-10; 1Cor 1:7-8).⁶³ Paul may well be correcting their mistaken sense of security which neglects the importance of believers' moral accountability.

Moreover, by relating the 'libertinistic' problem only to the 'Hellenistic assumptions' *inherent* in the Galatians themselves from the first, Jewett practically denies any real connection of it with the problem of nomism. In fact, Jewett seems aware of a sort of relation between the two, since he says at one point that Paul's 'ethic arrayed against libertinism was phrased *as a replacement of the law*'. Yet, his concern is only to prove that Paul's polemics against both problems are 'directed to

⁶² Rightly, Matera, 'Culmination' (1988) 82.

⁶³ Rightly, Watson, *Paul* (1988) 198 n. 75.

the congregation as a whole' (210), without succeeding in relating nomism and libertinism as inter-related phenomena. After all, despite his recognition that 'some connection with nomism' is indispensable in explaining the Galatian crisis, (198-99), Jewett does not go beyond the proposal of Schmithals.⁶⁴

Future eschatological justification

Finally, we shall comment briefly on the view of Betz that justification in Galatians is future-eschatological, throughout the letter.⁶⁵ As we shall argue later, this is in fact the view we are proposing as the only coherent interpretation of the data.

Interestingly, however, this claim of Betz creates a blatant contradiction in his exposition of Paul's argument as a whole. Commenting on Paul's argument of 'blessing' in 3:8, Betz rightly says that Paul 'simply identifies the blessing with God's "grace" and his "justification by faith"' (142). Yet, in 3:14, following most other interpreters, he identifies 'the promise of the Spirit' with 'the promise God made to Abraham'. Further, Betz identifies the content of the Abrahamic promise as the 'blessing' mentioned in 3:8ff., and infers that the Spirit should therefore be the promised blessing (3:14). With the coming of the Spirit, this promised blessing has therefore been fulfilled (152-3, 175). If so, it necessarily means that justification has also been realized, since, as noted above, Betz explicitly identifies 'blessing' with 'justification'. Betz does not seem to be aware of the problem, but this interpretation flatly contradicts his claim that justification in Galatians is a future blessing to be given at the Last Judgement. The problem is, of course, that his future eschatological

⁶⁴ Martin, *Foundations* (1986) 152-158 offers a similar reading, connecting 'realized eschatology' not only to the Galatians but also to the teaching of the agitators. But he too fails to relate the misguided experience of the Spirit with the propaganda of circumcision. Both contribute to the problem of libertinism, but how do they relate to each other?

⁶⁵ See his discussion of the theme, e.g., 116-119.

interpretation of justification does not cohere with his exposition of other parts of the letter which follows the line of ‘realized eschatology’. Since various themes in Paul’s argument are clearly inter-related, he should have done more to substantiate his claim of future justification in its relation to other themes such as ‘blessing’ and ‘promise’. In view of Paul’s clear statement in 5:5, Betz’ suggestion of ‘future justification’ is perhaps the most obvious option to take. Nevertheless, subsequent interpreters have mostly ignored his suggestion, which is unfortunate but understandable, considering his failure to relate it to Paul’s argument as a whole.

3. Thesis

Our survey above shows that, despite intense scholarly interest, Galatians still awaits an adequate account of its eschatological structure. In 1965 MacGorman⁶⁶ argued that ‘the structure of a parousia-eschatology is never abandoned; neither does it fade into a meaningless background’ (331). Yet he too, without being able to integrate it into Paul’s *main* argument, concedes that the evidence is incidental, probably due to the historical circumstances of the letter (253). Our survey confirms that this is indeed the situation in which most interpreters find themselves. For this reason the future eschatological motifs in Galatians are easily ignored or superficially treated, perpetuating the impression that Galatians is a document of ‘realized eschatology’.

We cannot, however, follow the advice of Beker to ‘ignore the future apocalyptic hints in Galatians’⁶⁷ since, however annoying they may be to us, they are certainly part of Paul’s argument in which he is as serious as anywhere else in the letter. We have to lend due weight to the unequivocally future eschatological tone of Paul’s

⁶⁶ ‘Analysis’ (1965).

⁶⁷ *Paul* (1980) 58.

statements in such passages as 5:5, 21b and 6:7-9. We have also rejected as unrealistic the attempt to hold both the 'already' and the 'not yet' together as Paul's response to the Galatian crisis. We are then left with only one, albeit radical, possibility to consider: does Paul's theological argument in chapters three and four really show a realized eschatology? Is the structure of realized eschatology in Paul's 'central' argument, which has almost become a fact beyond the burden of proof, as obvious as so many assume? Is it possible that the consensus reading of Paul's theological argument is a projection of scholarly idea into Paul's language?

The present study attempts to demonstrate that the structure of realized eschatology in Galatians is more assumed than actually proved, and that Paul's argument in Galatians is in fact set within a distinctively future eschatological framework. By saying this, of course, we do not mean that the letter does not have any interest in the past or the present. Galatians does speak frequently of what happened in the past as well as the believers' present privileges. Our contention is that Paul's ultimate intention in bringing them out, however, is not to impress their realized nature on his readers, but to make them see the meaning of the present within a fundamentally future eschatological point of view. This will then provide a coherent connection to Paul's ethical discourse in chapters five and six.

4. Context and method

Before we turn to detailed examination of the letter, however, a methodological discussion is in order. Interpretation, to a certain degree, is a subjective business, since interpreters necessarily bring their own presuppositions to the text with their

distorting effects.⁶⁸ As S. Garrett reminds us,⁶⁹ interpreters of an ancient text do not have the 'advantage' of ethnographers, who have both the living author and the original context of the 'social text' they are studying. Bewilderingly divergent, and often mutually contradictory, interpretations are proffered for a single text all with their own claims and grounds but with the jury always out. That is, the text is 'malleable';⁷⁰ interpreters have to actively 'construe' its meaning. And it is because of this malleability of the text that the question of context takes on special importance. Establishing the 'context' of the text in effect means gaining an 'expectation' of how the text should be, and in actual reading, it is this expectation/context that critically determines the way we 'construe' the text.⁷¹

Historical reconstruction and mirror-reading

In Galatians the dominant way of establishing a context is historical reconstruction through 'mirror-reading'. Here scholarly interest usually centres on the identity and teaching of Paul's opponents. Since Galatians is thought to be Paul's *response* to his opponents and their propaganda, it is a matter of 'extraordinary importance' for us, says Mußner, to 'grasp the physiognomy of the opponents as precisely as possible'.⁷²

⁶⁸ Stanton, 'Presuppositions' (1977) 60-71 (61): 'the philosophical and theological starting point which an interpreter takes and which he usually shares with some others'.

⁶⁹ Garrett, *Demise* (1989) 7-8.

⁷⁰ Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 6.

⁷¹ For the importance of 'genre expectation', see Hirsh, *Validity* (1967) 68-126 and Longman, *Literary Approach* (1987) 76-83. Here we are speaking in more general terms, not strictly 'literary genre'. Boers, *Justification* (1994) 1-41 discusses the issue in terms of 'macro-structure'.

⁷² Mußner 29. Sampley, 'From Text' (1991) 7 is more emphatic: 'Because Paul focuses so frequently on the position of his opponents, our capacity to understand Paul is *directly proportionate* to our ability to understand Paul's opponents.' See also Dunn, *Theology* (1993) xv.

Naturally, most studies of Paul begin by asking the identity of the agitators. E.g., Howard, *Crisis* (1991) 1-19; Barclay, *Obedying* (1988) 36-74; Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 4-29; Martyn, *Issues* (1997) 1-36; B. Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 25-34. For some interpreters, this question forms their main concern, as in Schmithals, *Gnostics* (1972) 13-64 and Munck, *Paul* (1954) 87-134.

Or, in Barclay's words, 'we will not understand the true import' of Paul's statements 'until we have critically reconstructed the main issues in the dispute and allowed ourselves to enter into the debate from *both* sides'.⁷³

The logic of mirror-reading is simple. Paul's statements are examined with a view to 'determine Paul's specific answers to charges and to opposing teachings'. Since 'in most cases, the charge can be seen by taking the negative of the defence' or 'by reversing the defensive statements',⁷⁴ with caution, the teachings of the opponents against whom Paul fights can be reconstructed. In this way, one gains a broad understanding of what transpires among those involved, which in turn gives an idea about the subject of the letter. Then, by reading Paul's argument anew in this newly reconstructed context, one may hope to have a better understanding of what Paul really means.

Lyons has already exposed the fundamental problems of this 'widely practiced art', with the radical conclusion that it is 'arbitrary, inconsistently applied, and unworkable'.⁷⁵ Since the reconstruction comes 'only as implications from some very brief and unclear statements', the interpreter has first to select relevant statements, and this process can be nothing but 'almost totally arbitrary'.⁷⁶ And since the textual data is also 'meager', other 'background sources' are needed to complete the picture, and selecting presumably relevant material is a very precarious process.⁷⁷ Lyons' main point is that the method inevitably involves too high a degree of arbitrariness, and

⁷³ 'Mirror-reading' (1987) 73. See also Roetzel, *Letters* (1991) 83.

⁷⁴ The quotes are from Tyson, 'Opponents' (1968) 241-54 (246, 244, 249). His statements seem somewhat naïve but nevertheless depict the gist of the method concisely.

⁷⁵ Lyons, *Autobiography* (1985) 119, 95.

⁷⁶ *Autobiography* (1985) 95, quoting Howard, *Crisis* (1991) 7.

⁷⁷ *Autobiography* (1985) 120.

there is no way of avoiding it. Mirror-reading is, he insists, ‘the fruitless cultivation of an unsown field’.⁷⁸

Most relevant for our purpose is Lyons’ comment that Paul’s depiction of the opponents is ‘obviously one-sided, probably exaggerated, even distorted’.⁷⁹ This observation about the inherently subjective nature of Paul’s letter is extremely important, since it reminds us of the crucial epistemological point that indiscriminate talk of a ‘historical context’ is misleading in the first place. There is no such thing as *the* situation; it has to be *constructed* by somebody, as researchers of human perception teach us.⁸⁰ In Watson’s word, ‘in its textual embodiment reality is inevitably shaped and reconstructed out of a heterogeneous mass of raw material; it is not simply transcribed or repeated’.⁸¹ Then what we have in Galatians is Paul’s ‘construction of the reality’. Paul, as an interpreter, actively constructs the situation, defining the problem in the light of his own theological presuppositions and his own apostolic purpose.⁸² We can, of course, speak of the ‘situation’ as the Galatians or the agitators would perceive it from their own, probably quite different, perspectives. But, then, the data we have in front of us is hopelessly inadequate.⁸³

⁷⁸ *Autobiography* (1985) 120. Most interpreters simply ignore or brush aside his criticism as too pessimistic without properly answering the criticism he offers. E.g., Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul* (1997) 195; Esler, *Galatians* (1998) 64-68. In a sense, Lyons’s ‘rhetorical’ approach too is based on *historical* analogy. Closer to the truth is probably that we simply do not know what is sown.

⁷⁹ We do not endorse, however, his uncalled-for value judgment.

⁸⁰ See Berger/Luckmann, *Construction* (1966); Geertz, *Culture* (1973); Ornstein, *Consciousness* (1986). Morgan/Barton, *Interpretation* (1988) 1-43 highlights the importance of an interpreter’s ‘interests’ and ‘aim’ as crucial factors in interpretation.

⁸¹ Watson, *Text* (1994) 2. ‘A certain opacity and resistance to penetration attend the phenomenon of the text’ (3). Thus, as Geertz, *Culture* (1973) 9 reminds us, ‘what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to’. This is quoted by Garrett, *Demise* (1989) 8-9.

⁸² This is what Beker ignores when he speaks of the situation *dictating* Paul’s argument. *Paul* (1980) 23-36, 37-108 (45, 53). His ‘coherence-contingency’ scheme is based on an unrealistic and outmoded ‘stimulus-response’ model of human perception. See also his ‘Recasting’ (1991) and the response by Achtemeier, ‘Finding’ (1991), especially 32 (on Sampley).

⁸³ So Schmithals excises 3:6-4:20 as reflecting only ‘Pauline interpretation of the situation’. *Gnostics* (1972) 41-42.

As noted before, scholarly efforts to get to the bottom of the situation means attempts to reconstruct the agitators' point of view, namely, the agitators' construction of the situation, which involves recovering the data Paul has rejected as inconsequential but are crucial for his opponents.⁸⁴ However, this audacious double jump from Paul's perspective to the agitators' viewpoint and back to Paul himself is not only impossible but also *unnecessary*, and even *detrimental*, if what we are after is Paul himself. In our effort to draw a more comprehensive picture of the situation, we in fact run the risk of impairing the 'zone of lucidity'⁸⁵ Paul has constructed from his own viewpoint. If we are to learn the view of the Galatians or the agitators, we will have to venture a mirror-reading after all, making up for the 'distortion' with other external sources that our 'poetic fantasy' happens to consider as 'relevant'.⁸⁶ If we are to understand *Paul's perspective*, however, such measures will only confuse us, since what we now have before us is the best possible source of what we are looking for. The conclusion seems inevitable: if our aim is to understand *Paul's argument*, we have to take *Paul's own perspective* as our interpretive framework.⁸⁷ Beginning with Paul's opponents is beginning from the wrong end.

Cosgrove⁸⁸ perceives this problem, when he says that since Galatians is not an objective record of the Galatian crisis, the necessary presupposition for proper exegesis is not the historical 'reconstruction of the opponents' position' but 'what Paul sees as the real issue', namely, 'the apostle's viewpoint'.⁸⁹ Despite his insight,

⁸⁴ Martyn's articulate reconstruction of the agitators' sermon provides an excellent example of this focus on the agitators. *Issues* (1998) 7-24.

⁸⁵ Berger/Luckmann, *Construction* (1966) 44: 'the reality of everyday life always appears as a zone of lucidity behind which there is a background of darkness'.

⁸⁶ Martyn, *Issues* (1998) 12 n. 10 says that historical reconstruction requires both 'scientific control' and 'poetic fantasy'.

⁸⁷ The importance of Paul's perspective is noted by Schlier 24; Westerholm, *Law* (1988) 150. See also Cosgrove's criticism of Schlier in *Cross* (1988) 22.

⁸⁸ Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 6-23.

⁸⁹ His term is 'epistolary perspective'. Cf. Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 6.

however, his discussion fails to gain sufficient clarity, since he is still operating under the notion of the historical situation. This is revealed by his tacit, but clear identification of the ‘epistolary perspective’ with the ‘situational context’ of the debate. Raising the right question of *Pauline* perspective, Cosgrove still considers it to be determined not by Paul but by the situation, rendering his hard-won insight into ‘Pauline perspective’ rather hollow.⁹⁰ He manages to produce the criteria of ‘directness’ and ‘specificity’ for the reconstruction, but it is Cosgrove himself who determines what is ‘direct’ and ‘specific’ and what is not.⁹¹

Also noteworthy is Stanley’s discussion.⁹² He is quite explicit about the subjective nature of interpretation. Rightly noting the ‘obscure’ nature of Paul’s references to ‘the situation’, he says that Paul’s letters ‘stand as *primary* sources regarding Paul’s *perception* of the situations in the churches he addressed, but only as *secondary* sources regarding their *actual* condition.’⁹³ Here, he is much closer to the mark, though he still speaks of ‘actual’ situation out there. This time too, however, the promise fails to substantiate itself, since Stanley resorts to the notion of ‘implied readers’ as a way of grasping Paul’s perspective.⁹⁴ Obviously, we do not have the ‘implied reader’ before us; it has to be reconstructed by somebody. After all, it is Stanley himself who assumes the role of the implied reader informing us (and Paul) how his intended readers would respond to his argument.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Thus, Cosgrove does carry out a reconstruction in his next chapter.

⁹¹ Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 23-38.

⁹² ‘Curse’ (1990) 481-511.

⁹³ ‘Curse’ (1990) 486, 496 (original emphases).

⁹⁴ ‘Curse’ (1990) 497.

⁹⁵ As in Cosgrove, here the interpreter’s subjective decision replaces external sources as the basis for reconstruction.

Rhetorical criticism and the context of Paul's letters

Rhetorical criticism also requires some consideration. Since Betz first cleared the way with his landmark studies,⁹⁶ a vast amount of literature has been produced, exploiting all the possible avenues available in this area.⁹⁷ Once again, the sheer diversity of proposed solutions indicates that Galatians does not display obvious marks of any particular rhetorical genre.⁹⁸ It has to be imposed on the text by the interpreter who approaches the text with a prior 'expectation' about its rhetorical genre. Then, it is in fact this expectation that determines the purpose of Paul's 'speech-act' in Galatians. 'Once Galatians is expected to look like an example of classical rhetoric', Kern complains, 'it does not seem to matter how far the text deviates from the handbook descriptions'.⁹⁹

Here, the fundamental problem is ignoring the fact that classical rhetoric functioned within its own specific social contexts which are quite different from that of Paul's letters. It is such disregard for the different social contexts and the consequent neglect of the contextual particularity of Paul's writings that constitute Kern's main critique of scholarly practice of this method. Paul's writings, including Galatians, differ from other ancient writings and this difference is 'conditioned by the fact that they were composed from a different point of view and for different people'.¹⁰⁰ Kern puts the matter succinctly.

If the epistle is recognized to be a persuasive, purposive text, then it should be analysed as such, and within the rhetorical world that created it. The constraints of that world shape the text; and, if the text and its shape

⁹⁶ 'Literary Composition' (1975) and *Galatians* (1979).

⁹⁷ Well-informed surveys are found in Anderson, *Rhetorical* (1996) 111-123 and Kern, *Rhetoric* (1998) 43-56.

⁹⁸ See Anderson, *Rhetorical* (1996) 124, 166-67.

⁹⁹ Kern, *Rhetoric* (1998) 257.

¹⁰⁰ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, (1953) 45, quoted in Kern, *Rhetoric* (1998) 257.

can reveal the intent of the author (as Muilenburg maintained), then that social world with its particular constraints may be properly brought in.¹⁰¹

This is a perfectly sensible demand: Galatians written by Paul should be interpreted according to ‘the apostle’s values and cultural outlook’ instead of being ‘determined from outside’.¹⁰² Of course, it is not to deny the value of rhetorical consideration altogether; Paul does use many rhetorical devices and proper examination of these will enhance our understanding of his argument significantly.¹⁰³ The point is that it is dangerous to appeal to rhetorical genre as a way of determining the *context* and *function* of the letter as a whole. Once again, we are back to Paul himself.

5. *Outline of the study*

Naturally, we shall begin our study by examining the letter with a goal of ascertaining the context of Paul’s argument. Abstaining from hazarding yet another hypothetical reconstruction of the situation, we will focus our attention on Paul’s own statements about the situation, demonstrating that Paul provides a very clear picture of *his* view of the crisis. This is chapter two. Chapter three concerns justification, the central theme of Paul’s argument. In this chapter we shall argue that in Galatians justification is a future hope, not a present reality, as it is in Romans. The following three chapters deal with Paul’s exegesis of the Abrahamic tradition: sonship (chapter four), promise (chapter five) and inheritance (chapter six). Here we shall attempt to show that the realized eschatological reading is based on superficial exegetical decisions and that

¹⁰¹ Kern, *Rhetoric* (1998) 55. As Dunn 20 says, it is ‘the theological issues and logic which are likely to have determined the main line and structure of the argument’. Martyn 23 (20-23, 145-46) even suggests ‘a moratorium of some length in this branch of research’ (21). Also see Stanton’s ‘review’ (2000).

¹⁰² Kern, *Rhetoric* (1998) 260. See also Weima, ‘Aristotle’ (1997) 458-468.

¹⁰³ Kern, *Rhetoric* (1998) 260 acknowledges the value of investigating rhetorical ‘commonplaces’, various rhetorical ‘devices’, and the ‘communicative forces’ of the letters’

Paul's perspective is fundamentally future-eschatological. This concludes our argument concerning the future eschatological nature of Paul's theological discussion. Chapter seven examines Paul's interpretation of the Christ event which allegedly sustains Paul's realized eschatological perspective. By highlighting the contextual purpose of Paul's interpretation, we will try to refute the claims of realized eschatology and bring out the centrality of the Spirit in Paul's christological argument. In the last chapter (chapter eight), explicating the moral thrust of Paul's future eschatological argument, we shall see how the whole letter coheres as a single, well-unified, polemic against what Paul perceives to be the problem. In the conclusion we shall summarize the result of our study with some reflections on its implications for future study of Galatians and Paul's letters in general.

shape. Anderson, *Rhetorical* (1996) 249-257 reaches a similar conclusion. A good case in point is the study of oral patterning by Harvey, *Listening* (1998).

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONTEXT OF PAUL'S ARGUMENT

1. The majority view

Scholars have long debated over the destination and date of Galatians without having reached any firm conclusion. It is also unlikely that a happy consensus will emerge in the near future.¹ Fortunately, however, our ignorance on such external matters does not necessarily hamper our understanding of the letter since the issues dealt with in the letter are mostly of theological nature. Even if the veil over these questions is somehow removed, it is unlikely that it will affect the way we understand Paul's argument to any significant degree.

More crucial for interpreting Paul's argument is the *immediate* situation which prompted Paul's writing of this letter. As already noted, for most interpreters the question of 'situation' mainly concerns Paul's opponents. Numerous attempts have been made to identify the nature of these agitators, only to produce the 'welter of opposing opinions and conflicting theories'.² Despite such diversity, however, a survey of major proposals reveals a substantial family resemblance in the general contours of the situation behind the letter and the basic thrust of Paul's response to this crisis.³

First of all, by focusing on Paul's opponents, it is normally *assumed* that Galatians is a resumé of the conflict between Paul and his (Jewish Christian) opponents. Thus

¹ These questions are frequently rehearsed in major commentaries.

² Longenecker lxxix.

³ Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 31-71, 229-238; Beker, *Paul* (1980) 43-44; Mußner 11-29; Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 29-52; Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982); Barrett, *Freedom* (1985); Barclay, *Obedience* (1988) 36-74; Longenecker lxxxviii-c; Hong, *Law* (1993) 97-120; B. Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 25-34; Martyn, *Issues* (1997) 7-24; Betz 6-9, 28-33; *idem*, 'Defense' (1976) 99-114.

Paul's real dialogue partners are the agitators and not the Galatians.⁴ Though being actual recipients of the letter, the interpretive role of the Galatians remains secondary. It is the agitators, not the helpless Galatians, that Paul's theological polemic primarily aims at.

Secondly, as far as Paul's central theological argument is concerned, the crisis is primarily dogmatic in nature. For Paul it is the 'false doctrine' of his opponents that constitutes the heart of the crisis. Naturally, Paul's response too is fundamentally doctrinal, refuting their false theology by reaffirming the validity of his own theology especially through a reinterpretation of the Christ event. As Betz puts it, Galatians represents 'the first systematic apology of Christianity' over against 'the first radical questioning of the Pauline gospel'.⁵ That is, Galatians is read primarily as the record of a 'theological debate'.⁶

Thirdly, these two contextual assumptions determine the thrust of Paul's polemic: since the agitators attack Paul's gospel by *questioning* the status of the Galatians founded on Paul's law-free gospel, Paul *defends* his Galatian converts by affirming the validity of his gospel. Paul polemicizes against the Galatians too, but he does so by *reminding* and *reassuring* them of the privileges they already possess in Christ and not by questioning them as the agitators do.

⁴ Hence the title of Brinsmead's study, *Galatians: A Dialogical Response to Opponents*. See also, e.g., Donaldson, 'Curse' (1989) 97; Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul* (1997) 200; Weima, 'Gal 6:11-18' (1993) 90-107; Kertelge, 'Rechtfertigungslehre' (1968) 212; Dunn 275.

Thus, Galatians is usually read in the context of the Jew-Gentile problem. Mußner 11-29; Sanders, *Law* (1983) 19, 51 n. 18; Martyn 40-42, *idem*, *Issues* (1998) 71-84, 47-75, 191-208 stress that the conflict is intra-Christian, but it still remains that Paul's criticism falls on the *Jewish* side of the Jewish Christians, as Hübner, *Law* (1984) 152 rightly reminds us.

⁵ Betz 28.

⁶ It is somewhat ironic to note that *historical* reconstruction often means one of a *dogmatic* dispute. Both in taking the letter in the context of the conflict between Pauline and Jewish forms of Christianity and as an expression of a theological conflict (ideas), F. C. Baur still seems to be carrying the day. Cf. Baur, *Paul* (1875). See also Kümmel, *History* (1972) 132.

Finally, intent on authenticating the present status of his Gentile converts, Paul's argument naturally carries a strong note of *realized eschatology*. This is done by the strategic christological focus Paul gives to his argument. By faith in Christ the Galatians have already been justified. The only seed of Abraham is Christ; the Galatians who by faith are now in Christ share the same identity as the seed of Abraham. Since Christ also represents the fulfilment of God's promise, in Christ the Galatians already enjoy the benefit of this fulfilled promise, i.e., the realized inheritance. Inevitably, a strong emphasis also falls on the Galatians' experience of the Spirit, which functions as the proof *par excellence* for the present reality of such contested blessings.⁷ It is the present reality of justification and the promised inheritance, and the eschatological superfluity of the law that forms the heartbeat of Paul's polemic in Galatians.

This widely subscribed view of the epistolary situation sketched above reveals one very striking fact about the usual practice of historical reconstruction: *interpreters attempt to reconstruct the context of Paul's polemic mostly from his theological argument in which the situation in Galatia is less visible, while leaving out of account those passages in which Paul speaks of it directly and explicitly.*⁸ This neglect is due to the implicit decision that Paul's confrontations with the Galatians are not immediately relevant for reconstructing the context of Paul's argument which is assumed to be Paul's doctrinal debate with the Jewish Christian rival missionaries rather than the Galatians themselves. This is, however, begging the question. To be sure, it may be a possible way of reading Paul's heavily 'theological' response, but

⁷ Hence one often hears of 'defence of the Spirit'. See n. 23 in chapter eight.

⁸ The problem is detected by Schmithals who claims that Paul's argument in chapters three and four do not reflect the situation in Galatia since it is 'traditional' and 'relatively timeless'. 'Judaisten' (1983) 27-58 (49-50). In our opinion, however, his exclusive focus on chapters 5-6 is equally problematic in that he too ignores those passages where Paul is most explicit about the nature of the problem he deals with.

the problem is that it does not cohere well with what Paul himself actually says of the situation in Galatia.

The proper step to take first is to listen carefully to what Paul himself says about the ‘problem’ he deals with and to try to follow his argument accordingly, instead of trying to read between Paul’s lines in the light (or darkness) of a hypothetically imagined context. To be sure, many think that one has to run the risk of reconstructing the situation, since Paul says so little about it. This is true, if one means by the ‘situation’ the Galatian crisis from the *agitators’* point of view. Paul’s interest in the teaching of his opponents remains superficial; even the little he says about them is not necessarily fair. This should not, however, blind us to the equally true fact that throughout the letter Paul does provide a substantial amount of information about what *he* perceives to be the ‘crisis’ in the Galatian churches (1:6-10; 3:3; 4:8-11, 12-20, 21; 5:1-4, 7-12; 6: 12-13). And this *Pauline* portrait of the situation is, after all, what we need to know since *his argument in the letter is his response to what he considers to be the problem*; not a reflexive reaction to an agenda set by his opponents.⁹

2. *Pauline context*

The purpose of this section is to ascertain the context of Paul’s polemic by examining Paul’s statements about the problem to which he is responding. Two main questions will be discussed: 1) What is the exact problem Paul perceives in Galatia? 2) Given the way Paul perceives the problem in Galatia, is the view of ‘realized eschatology’ plausible?

⁹ Rightly, Gundry, ‘Grace’ (1985) 9.

The Galatian apostasy as the heart of the problem

What is the problem in Galatia? That is, what problem does the letter respond to? Right from the beginning of the letter, Paul does not leave his readers in any doubt. He cries out: 'I am astonished that you are defecting from the One who called you in the grace (of Christ)' (v. 6). Since καλέσαντος most probably refers to God,¹⁰ Paul's depiction of the Galatians' behaviour as a 'turning away' (μετατίθεσθε)¹¹ from God forms an unmistakable charge of apostasy.¹² Paul's perspective is radical but unambiguous: the Galatians are defecting from God; it is a clear case of apostasy. Perhaps, it may not have been fair since, as Paul's reference to 'another gospel' implies, they may have had no intention of leaving God altogether. For Paul, however, there is no such thing as 'another gospel', which in reality is nothing but a 'perversion' (μεταστρέψαι) of the true gospel Paul himself had proclaimed to the Galatians. As far as Paul himself is concerned, the Galatians are really turning away from God, and this is the heart of the problem that provoked this bitter response of Paul's.

It is widely noted that this is the place where Paul normally announces the central theme of the letter in the form of 'thanksgiving' and 'intercessory prayer' (cf. Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 1:4-8; Phil 1:3; 1 Thess 1:2-10; cf. Col 1:3; 1 Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 1:3; Philem 4).¹³ Instructively, in Galatians a severe 'rebuke'¹⁴ replaces the usual, appreciative,

¹⁰ Cf. 5:8; Rom 4:17; 8:30; 9:12, 24; 11:29; 1 Cor 1:9, 26; 7:15; Phil 3:15; 1 Thess 2:12; 4:7; 5:24.

¹¹ The word frequently refers to 'conversion'. Schlier 36 n. 1; Betz 47 n. 41 and references there.

¹² Hübner, *Law* (1984) 20. Mußner 53 suggests a possible allusion to Israel's apostasies in LXX Ex 32:8, Deut 9:16A and Judg 2:17.

¹³ Schubert, *Thanksgivings* (1939) 180; Funk, *Language* (1966) 257. As Stowers, *Letter Writing* (1986) 21-22 reminds us, this too is 'a genuine Hellenistic epistolary form' but this recognition does not diminish the importance of Paul's creative use of thanksgiving.

¹⁴ θαυμάζω is a formula of rebuke. See Mullins, 'Formulas' (1972) 380-90.

‘thanksgiving’. This move, hardly abnormal in terms of epistolary convention,¹⁵ is nevertheless exceptional for Paul.¹⁶ That is, by dropping the usual thanksgiving and throwing a stern rebuke instead, Paul deliberately ‘signals the mood and purpose of the letter’, providing a forecast of what is to follow.¹⁷ If we take this cue seriously, then, the *major* target of Paul’s polemic is the apostatizing behaviour of the Galatians and not the ‘theology’ of the agitators. The ‘truth of the gospel’ is at the centre of the matter, but the immediate focus does not seem to be discussing the gospel itself but denouncing the Galatians’ defection from it.¹⁸ Of course, Paul is fully aware of certain (τινες) ‘trouble makers’ (ταράσσοντες) behind the Galatians converts (v. 7), on whom he does not hesitate to pour divine curse (v. 9).¹⁹ Yet, it is the defecting behaviour of the Galatians rather than the false teaching of the agitators that receives the direct brunt of Paul’s rebuke. It is the Galatians who are abandoning God’s calling; it is they who Paul takes issue with.²⁰

The next place where Paul speaks directly of the Galatian problem is 3:1-5. Paul’s definition of the problem is succinct: the Galatians, despite having begun with the Spirit, are now ending with the flesh (v. 3). This is, of course, not to say that they are ‘adding’ the flesh onto the Spirit just for good measure. Within his deliberate and strict antithesis of Spirit and flesh (4:21-31; 5:16-26; 6:7-9), Paul’s point is that the Galatians, now allied with the flesh, are giving up the Spirit, the very foundation of

¹⁵ So White, *Greek Letter* (1972) 18, 49; Hanson, *Abraham* (1988) 33-43; Anderson, *Rhetorical* (1996) 126.

¹⁶ Dunn 39 rightly criticises the overly rhetorical approach of Betz 47 and Hanson, *Abraham* (1988) 44.

¹⁷ Rightly, Stowers, *Letter Writing* (1986) 22; Duncan 15-6; Bruce 80; Becker, *Paulus* (1998) 289; Fung 43.

¹⁸ *Contra* most interpreters, e.g., Cousar 19; Longenecker 19.

¹⁹ Even this curse on the agitators carries a paraenetic (warning) function for the Galatians, as Wiles, *Intercessory* (1974) 134 and Mußner 62 note.

²⁰ See Hartmann, ‘Gal 3.15-4.11’ (1993) 130: ‘The meta-propositional base “I am surprised that”/“I urge you (not) to” is an indicator that the theme is not directly a theoretical, theological one, but one concerning behavior’.

their Christian existence. The point is not the theological meaning of the Spirit or flesh;²¹ Paul's concern is the Galatians' act of abandoning the Spirit in favour of the flesh.²²

Here too, Paul is not oblivious to the presence of *τίς* behind their defection, 'casting an evil eye' (ἐβάσκανεν)²³ on the Galatians (v. 1). However, Paul's indignation aims at the Galatians: ὦ ἀνόητοι Γαλάται! (v. 1); οὕτως ἀνόητοί ἐστε (v. 3).²⁴ Bewitched or not, it is still the Galatians themselves, not the obscure *τίς*, who are most responsible for the crisis; *they* should have known better.

In 4:8-11 the problem is described as the observance of the Jewish²⁵ calendar (v. 10). Again, Paul's criticism is radical but straightforward: in so doing, they are 'converting' (ἐπιστρέφετε) back to their former slavery under 'the elements of the world' (v. 9).²⁶ In Paul's view, this is a denial of their knowledge of God, or of God's act of knowing them. This is precisely the same charge as that in 1:6. Here, the agitators do not come into the picture at all; the issue is strictly between the angry apostle and his wayward converts caught in the act of backsliding.²⁷

Gal 4:12-20 is particularly instructive for grasping Paul's perception of the problem in Galatia. Scholarly embarrassment over this 'not-quite-theological' talk in

²¹ *Contra* Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 38, 42-43, 103. Cf. Duncan 81.

²² Martyn 285 perceives this: 'the Spirit and the flesh primarily as *means* that enable the human being to accomplish something' (emphasis added).

²³ It is not clear how literally Paul speaks at this point. See especially Longenecker, 'Until Christ' (1999) 93-100 and *Triumph* (1998) 150-155; Witherington 201-4; Neyrey, 'Bewitched' (1988) 72-100. Anyway, Paul's distress is effectively expressed.

²⁴ This expresses 'indignant astonishment'. Zerwick, *Greek* (1963) 12. Cf. *BDF* § 146. See Schlier 118; Anderson, *Rhetorical* (1996) 142: 'However, the nature of this letter as primarily a *rebuke* explains the high degree of *πάθος* throughout' (emphasis original).

²⁵ So Vielhauer, 'Gesetzesdienst' (1975) 552; Thornton, 'New Moon' (1989) 97-100. *Contra* T. Martin, 'Apostasy' (1995) 437-61, who suggests a reference to 'pagan' idol worship.

²⁶ The meaning of the phrase is debated. Bandstra, *Elements* (1964) 31-72; Reike, 'Law' (1951) 259-76; Vielhauer, 'Gesetzesdienst' (1975) 543-55; Martyn 393-406 = *Issues* (1997) 125-40. A good review is available in Arnold, 'Stoicheia' (1996) 55-76.

²⁷ According to Hartmann, 'Gal 4.15-4.11' (1993) 134, 4:8-11 rounds off the unit 3:1-4:11 by returning to the main, practical theme, thereby producing a ring-composition.

the midst of highly theological argument is well known. Why an abrupt ‘emotional’ appeal in the middle of serious ‘theological’ arguments? When Burton states that at this point Paul, ‘dropping argument’, now ‘turns to appeal begging the Galatians’,²⁸ he in fact speaks for the majority of interpreters.²⁹ Betz’s appeal to rhetorical function may explain the presence of an ‘emotional’ piece in the midst of theological argument, but otherwise it still does not carry the discussion any further.³⁰ R. Longenecker thinks that at this point Paul begins the second, ‘request section’ ‘by recalling his past relations with his converts and contrasting their past and present attitudes to him’.³¹ Yet, it is still not clear how an appeal to the once amiable relationship helps to get down to the real business of ‘requesting’ them to stop their nomistic enthusiasm and Spirit-less life.³² This seems as far as one can get up this particular alley.³³ If one sets aside one’s preoccupation with ‘theology’, however, it is not difficult to see that this is exactly the same kind of response Paul has been making to his defecting converts (1:6; 3:1-5; 4:8-11). In fact, what one has to explain is not the presence of this passage in the middle of Paul’s ‘theological’ argument, but the role of his theological argument accompanying his rebuking appeals to the backsliding Galatians.

Now with the aching sense of estrangement, the immediate issue seems to be a personal relationship between Paul and the Galatians. Since Paul himself is the

²⁸ Burton 235.

²⁹ Mußner 304-5 advises us to exercise ‘intuitive grasping of the meaning and supplementing what is missing’. According to Schlier 208, the passage is ‘an argument of the heart’, revealing not just ‘strong pathos’ but also an ‘erratic train of thought’.

³⁰ Betz 220-1. For him, the passage is based on the Hellenistic *topos* of ‘friendship’ (περὶ φιλίας).

³¹ Longenecker 188.

³² Longenecker 184-8. The scheme of ‘rebuke-request’, first articulated by Hanson, *Abraham* (1988) and ‘Paradigm’ (1994), is artificial. A rebuke is by definition a rebuke of something, and thus automatically carries hortatory function, and *vice versa*. Are 4:12b-18, 20, 5:2-5, 7-10 rebukes or requests? For a critique of this scheme, see the review by Stanton (1992).

³³ Martyn 418-9; Dunn 231.

embodiment of the truth,³⁴ however, this relational breakdown also involves their deviation from the gospel itself (cf. 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; 1 Thess 1:6). Paul's focus is still on the Galatians' defection from the gospel.

More concretely, the change of attitude by the Galatians and their loss of 'blessing' are evidence of their losing sight of the Spirit of Christ mediated by Paul's ministry (cf. 3:3). That this is not an overinterpretation is confirmed by Paul's agonizing cry that he now undergoes the pain of child-birth until Christ should be formed among the Galatians (v. 19).³⁵ His remark that he is doing this 'again' reflects Paul's fear that Christ is not visible any more among the Galatians, and thus he has to convert them once again. His focus remains consistent: 'I am perplexed about *you*!' (v. 20).³⁶ Paul's 'almost sarcastic and bitter tone' renders even his calling them τέκνα μου polemical.³⁷

The same charge appears again in 5:7. The Galatians were running well, but someone cut in on their race (ἐνέκοψεν) with the result that they are not obeying the truth any more. Inasmuch as the 'truth' refers to the truth of the gospel (2:5, 14),³⁸ this is yet another variation of the same charge of apostasy. Paul's remark that the agitators' propaganda is not 'from the one who calls you' confirms this (5:8; 1:6). Here, as in 3:1, Paul is not just reminding the Galatians of the obvious cause of the trouble; by way of a rhetorical question, Paul in fact rebukes the Galatians who

³⁴ Note the words of Kelber quoted in Thiselton, *New Horizons* (1992) 70-71: 'The teacher lives a life that is paradigmatic in terms of his message. Because in oral hermeneutics words have no existence apart from persons, participation in the message is inseparable from imitation of the speaker: "We decided to share with you not only the Gospel of God but also ourselves" (1 Thess 2:8, 9)'.

³⁵ The 'formation of Christ' means more than restoration of relationship. Cf. Betz, 'Spirit' (1974) 158.

³⁶ ἀποροῦμαι is not so much an expression of uncertainty as of perplexity. Paul has no shred of doubt about the present condition in Galatia (1:6; 3:1; 4:15, 16, 21; 5:2-5, 7; 6:12-3). Rightly, Betz 236.

³⁷ Mußner 312.

³⁸ Hübner, *EDNT* 1:59.

allowed themselves to be carried away by these agitators.³⁹ Once again, Paul's concern is the conduct of the Galatians: *they* have stopped obeying the truth. And this is the crisis Paul perceives in Galatia.

Paul's problem is thus clear: the apostasy of his Galatian converts.⁴⁰ Though Paul is fully aware of the influence of the agitators, it is the Galatians following them that Paul takes to be the real problem. As Paul sees it, the Galatians are the main culprits of the crisis, and not helpless victims of conflicting theologies. Accordingly, they form the major target of Paul's angry polemic in the letter. That is, the primary purpose of the whole letter, *including his theological argument*, is to upbraid the Galatians for their apostatizing behaviour with a view to restoring them to the truth of his gospel.⁴¹ The proper subject of the letter is not Paul's gospel (theology) itself but *the Galatians' disposition in relation to it*.

Thus, Galatians is not a resumé of Paul's theological altercation with his rival theologians but his pastoral engagement with his backsliding converts. It is crucial to bear this pastoral context in mind, especially when we interpret the function of Paul's theological argument which is open to various interpretations depending on its context. To be sure, the Galatians' apostasy is caused by the 'bad theology' promoted by the agitators; Paul's polemic too is thoroughly grounded on his own gospel. But Paul's immediate burden is not to expound his theology, either christology or pneumatology, since the problem at hand is not these *theological* issues *per se* but the

³⁹ Rightly, Williams 139; Martyn 474; Betz 264; Mußner 355. Anderson, *Rhetorical* (1996) 160 sees here an example of ἔμφασις, 'implying ... the stupidity of the Galatians in allowing themselves to be seduced away from the *truth*' (emphasis original).

⁴⁰ We do not need to discuss the precise nature of this apostasy at this point, which we will do in chapter eight. What we need to confirm here is that this apostasy of the Galatians, whatever it may be, is Paul's main concern.

⁴¹ Cf. Anderson, *Rhetorical* (1996) 164-65: 'Paul's forthright critique of the Galatians'.

anthropological one of the Galatians' disobedience (5:7).⁴² His talk of the Christ event and the Spirit is controlled by his contextual purpose of dealing with the Galatians who are presently *deviating* from Christ and the Spirit.⁴³

'Then and now': Paul's polemical depiction of the present

Paul's identification of the present crisis as a case of apostasy has a critical bearing on the thrust of his polemic: if Paul is criticizing the apostatizing Galatians, it would scarcely occur to him to make his case by endorsing the sufficiency of their present status. On the contrary, a natural way of dealing with the problem would be to teach them the serious nature of their present behaviour and its consequence. This is precisely what Paul does in Galatians. Indeed, one of the most prominent devices Paul employs in his polemic is *the deliberate contrast between the terrible situation in the present and the desirable condition in the past*.⁴⁴

The first contrast is between the Galatians' *present* defection (μετατίθεσθε, present) and God's calling in the past (καλέσαντος).⁴⁵ The present time is that of apostasy in which agitation and perversion of the gospel hold sway (v. 7). Both θαυμάζω and οὕτως ταχέως⁴⁶ effectively express the complete change of situation Paul perceives in Galatia. Now he cannot simply celebrate the reality of God's calling

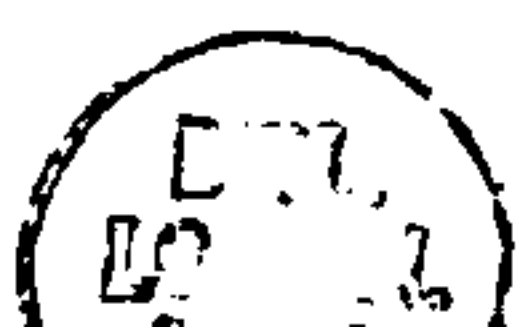
⁴² Scholars' own interest in Paul's 'thought-world' or 'theology' often obscures Paul's more practical concern. E.g., Patte, *Paul's Faith* (1983); Boers, *Justification* (1994) 50, 65. Paul's pastoral concern is based on his theological convictions but it does not mean that they are his main reason for writing this letter.

⁴³ So Stanley, 'Curse' (1990) 486-492.

⁴⁴ This has not been sufficiently noted, partly due to scholarly preoccupation with the eschatological 'then-now' contrast. Cf. Tachau, *Einst* (1972). See Martyn 411; Longenecker 180; Fung 189. A rare exception is Suhl, 'Galaterbrief' (1987) 3129-3132: 'Mit dieser positiven Vergangenheit kontrastiert nun aufs schärfste die Gegenwart' (3130). See the diagram in 3131. Also Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 157-58, who, however, still gives a very realized eschatological interpretation.

⁴⁵ Cf. Mußner 54 n. 58.

⁴⁶ Whether referring to the interval between Paul's ministry and the crisis or the swiftness of their apostasy, Paul's 'astonishment' remains the same. So Ebeling, *Truth* (1981) 45.



(cf. 1 Thess 1:3-4); it will not do either to invoke God's faithfulness (cf. 1 Cor 1:9; 1 Thess 5:24). Not that he doubts the authenticity of God's calling, which was indeed 'a compelling summons they had been unable to deny' 'calling into being the new creation, the eschatological community of the church'.⁴⁷ Paul's frustration, however, is that the Galatians themselves are abandoning this call of God, i.e., their conversion itself.⁴⁸ Under the circumstances Paul's evocation of God's calling/conversion in the past, instead of being an affirmation of the adequacy of their present status, functions as a polemic designed to awaken the Galatians to the gravity of their present deviation.⁴⁹

In 3:1-5 too we observe the same contrast. Once again, Paul reminds the Galatians of their laudable life since conversion. The aorist προεγράφη⁵⁰ in v. 1 refers to Paul's initial ministry in Galatia, through which the Christ *was* 'publicly displayed' as the Crucified Messiah.⁵¹ The same goes for the receiving the Spirit occasioned by their ἄκοη πίστεως (vv. 2, 5).⁵² Some argue that ἐπιχορηγῶν (present) in v. 5 denotes God's continuing outpouring of the Spirit.⁵³ This is unlikely, since it merely resumes the question in v. 2 without any implication of continuance.⁵⁴ While Paul presupposes the ongoing presence of the Spirit (5:16-26; 6:7-9), his charge that the Galatians are abandoning the Spirit (v. 3) further renders such an intention improbable.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Dunn 40 and Martyn 109, respectively.

⁴⁸ Cf. Burton 20.

⁴⁹ Cf. Ebeling, *Truth* (1985) 46-47.

⁵⁰ Davis, 'ΠΡΟΕΓΡΑΦΗ' (1999) explores the possibility that Paul presented the Christ crucified by his own personal disposition, which makes good sense in the light of 2:19-20 and 6:14-16. Similarly, Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation* (1986) 159-60.

⁵¹ προεγράφη, qualified by κατ' ὀφθαλμούς, is better taken as locative, as most commentators agree.

⁵² See nn. 125, 127-8 in chapter seven.

⁵³ E.g., Mußner 211; Bruce 151; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 388; Witherington 215; Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 47-48.

⁵⁴ E.g., Dunn, *Baptism* (1970) 108; Stott 71; Bligh, *Greek* (1966) 129.

⁵⁵ Cf. Burton 152.

Though not explicit, the remarks that the crucified Christ was *previously* real may imply that He is *presently* not visible in the midst of their attraction to circumcision (cf. 4:19).⁵⁶ Paul's criticism in v. 3 brings this contrast between 'then' and 'now' to telling clarity: 'having begun by the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?' The wonderful 'beginning with the Spirit' *in the past* (ἐναρξάμενοι, aorist participle) is brought into a stark contrast to *their present* (νῦν) in which they are ending (ἐπιτελείσθε, present indicative) with the flesh at the complete cost of the Spirit. In all probability, their life in the Spirit must have continued until recently, namely, until the intrusion of the agitators (5:7).⁵⁷ Yet their allegiance to the Spirit has now become a thing in the past; they are now allied with the flesh. Paul, referring the Galatians back to their happy days in the past (the crucified Christ displayed, their hearing with faith, the subsequent coming of the Spirit), brings the deplorable poverty in the present, their association with the flesh, into sharp relief. In other words, Paul speaks of the Spirit not to remind them of what they already possess but to make them realize what they have lost due to their apostatizing disposition.

The same perspective keeps occurring whenever Paul turns to the situation in Galatia. 4:8-11 is particularly interesting in that now the comparison is threefold: before and after Christ; before and after the coming of the agitators; the Galatians' pre-conversion life and their present backsliding which Paul depicts as an act of counter-conversion. 'Formerly' (τότε), that is, before they knew God, they were enslaved to mere idols (v. 9). Then comes the contrasting 'but now' (νῦν δέ). The

⁵⁶ As the aorist προεργάφη suggests, the vivid display of the crucified Christ is does not apply to the *present* of the Galatian believers (4:19!; 5:4). *Contra* Longenecker 101.

⁵⁷ Martyn's association (123) of the Spirit with the work of the agitators is puzzling. If so, Paul's whole case based on the fact of 'the Spirit by faith' falls to the ground. Rightly Bruce 152: 'It is a natural inference from Paul's rhetorical questions that the 'other gospel' which was being presented to the Galatian Christians took no notice of the Spirit'. See also Hays, 'Review' (2000) 376.

contrast should have ended here but, tragically, another set of contrast has become necessary. The reference to ‘having known God’ (γνόντες) and ‘having been known by God’ (γνωσθέντες) clearly points to their conversion.⁵⁸ Yet, these two aorist participles⁵⁹ are subordinate to the main question led by πῶς. In this way, the immediate force of νῦν falls on the main verb ἐπιστρέφετε with the result that it stands in a stark contrast to their knowledge of God at the time of their conversion. Of course, the aorist participles are ‘ingressive’,⁶⁰ but the syntax suggests that Paul’s immediate intention is not to affirm their knowledge of God in the present⁶¹ but to polemicize against their present behaviour of abandoning it against the backdrop of their previous experience of receiving it.⁶²

The tragic irony of the Galatian crisis is that there is now an incredible disjuncture where there should be continuity, namely, between their conversion/‘knowledge of God’ (past) and their defection (present). The inevitable result is that an ominous continuity now emerges where there should have been an absolute disjuncture; the νῦν of their second ‘conversion’ (ἐπιστρέφετε) to the agitators turns out to be a reversion to the τότε of the pre-conversion slavery!⁶³ Paul’s incredulity at such a ‘foolish’ retreat (3:3) is borne out forcefully by the structure of the sentence: πῶς ... πάλιν ... πάλιν ... ἄνωθεν.

Paul’s point is not that taking up the suggestion of the agitators ‘in their quest for salvation, the Galatians are behaving as though Christ had not come, thereby showing

⁵⁸ With Dunn 225.

⁵⁹ For the tense of the aorist participle, see Fanning, *Verbal Aspect* (1990) 408-416.

⁶⁰ Bruce 202.

⁶¹ *Contra* Dunn 225. The judgment of Tachau, *Einst* (1972) 128 that the τότε – νῦν contrast is designed to awaken the Galatians to their present status of freedom from the law is off the mark.

⁶² The frequently found ‘But now, knowing God’ is therefore misleading. *Contra* Martyn 411; Longenecker 180; Fung 189; Mußner 298.

⁶³ See Bruce 203; Fung 192; Betz 216. Martyn is somewhat confusing here. Compare 411 and 418.

that they do not know what time it is'⁶⁴. The mere forgetfulness of time would not have been a serious problem, since they can 'wake up to the real world' anytime without any damage done. The truth is that their present behaviour actually *transfers* them back to the time of τότε, thereby putting them back under the control of 'the elements of the world'. Once again, the issue is not the eschatological decisiveness of Christ but the gravity of the Galatians' behaviour which renders it meaningless and all 'in vain'.⁶⁵ No wonder Paul's agony is so great: φοβοῦμαι ὑμᾶς μή πως εἰκῇ κεκοπίακα εἰς ὑμᾶς (v. 11).⁶⁶

In 4:12-20 too Paul creates the same contrast between the wonderful 'then' and the terrible 'now'. When Paul first proclaimed the gospel, the Galatians, against the odds, received Paul 'as an angel of God', or even 'as Christ Jesus' (v. 14), willing to do anything for him (v. 15). Then the agitators slipped in, which has changed the situation completely. Paul continues to tell the truth, but the Galatians have turned their back on him; Paul is now (γέγονα, perfect) treated as their 'enemy' (v. 16). This radical change from 'angel of God' and 'Christ Jesus' to 'enemy' is succinctly depicted by the rhetorical demand: ποῦ οὖν ὁ μακαρισμὸς ὑμῶν; (v. 15a; cf. 3:1), which stresses the painful absence of the 'blessing' *in the present* which used to be so vivid among them *in the past* (τὸ πρότερον).

As in 4:8-11 Paul describes this change as a reversion to their pre-conversion life. By saying that he is now undergoing the 'birth pang' *again* (πάλιν), Paul in effect says that the deviation from him and his gospel means nothing but the *reversal* of the

⁶⁴ *Contra* Witherington 302; Parsons, 'Being' (1988) 241.

⁶⁵ It is changing the category to gloss over the problem of human apostasy by appealing to God's faithfulness.

⁶⁶ Paul has already toiled for the Galatians, and Paul, seeing what is happening in Galatia, now worries the possibility of his past toil becoming in vain. For the force of μή πῶς + indicative construction, see *BDF* 188; Zerwick, *Greek* (1963) 118.

birth of the Galatian community itself mediated through his ministry.⁶⁷ Burton sums up Paul's point aptly: 'The reactionary step which the Galatians are in danger of taking, forces upon the apostle the painful repetition of that process by which he first brought them into the world of faith in Christ, and his pain, he declares, must continue till they have really entered into vital fellowship with Christ'.⁶⁸

Paul makes the same point in 5:1. He demands that the Galatians should not become subject to the yoke of slavery *again* (πάλιν). The point is clear: if they indeed go on with their present behaviour, they will end up in slavery which is in fact the same as their pre-conversion slavery under idols.⁶⁹ His reminder of the liberating work of Christ, like his reminder of their conversion, makes his warning all the more poignant, highlighting the enormity of their present deviation: following the agitators, they will lose the very thing Christ died for, their freedom in the Spirit (5:13).

Paul's charge in 5:7 reveals the same contrast. Referring to the time before the intrusion of the agitators, Paul says that the Galatians were running (ἐτρέχετε) very well. The use of the imperfect clearly implies that this 'running well' does not apply to their present time.⁷⁰ They have allowed the agitators to cut in, with the result⁷¹ that they are not obeying the truth any more.

Paul's description of the Galatian situation reveals a consistent and very *negative* picture of the 'now' in Galatia: apostasy from God, absence of Christ, loss of the Spirit, return to slavery, and disobedience to the truth of the gospel. The wonderful state of affairs established by his proclamation of the crucified Messiah and his

⁶⁷ Rightly, Martyn 429; Cousar 101. *Contra* Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 78 who takes the reference to be to 'maturation' rather than to 'reconversion'. The 'apocalyptic' readings found in Käsemann, *Perspectives* (1971) 31; Gaventa, 'Maternity' (1990) 189-201; Martyn 426-431; Witherington 315-16 confuse the issue, loading too much onto Paul's imagery.

⁶⁸ Burton 249.

⁶⁹ Burton 271; Sanders, *Law* (1983) 69; Gundry-Volf, *Perseverance* (1990) 208-9.

⁷⁰ Burton 281-82.

⁷¹ Taking μή πειθεσθαι as result rather than purpose. So Mußner 355.

mediation of the Spirit has now been pushed back to a time in the past. The present condition in Galatia, forming an appalling contrast with their happy past, is not something to endorse or celebrate but only to denounce and rectify. It is not that the work of Christ is insufficient or their experience of the Spirit is inadequate. The point is that the Galatians themselves are departing from such eschatological realization, making it all 'in vain'. Paul invokes what happened in the beginning over and over again, but he does not do so to affirm the sufficiency of the Galatians' present.⁷² On the contrary, his painful and contrasting reminder turns out to be a polemical device with which to impress on them the cost and consequence of their 'present deviation'. Particularly instructive in this respect is Paul's deliberate equation of the Galatians' present with the time before their conversion, a most telling criticism of what it means to follow the lead of the agitators. This simply falsifies the popular construal of Paul's argument as a positive *affirmation* of the present status of the Galatians. This supposition may be able to hold water within the 'theological' argument itself but it flies in the face of Paul's own construal of the 'situation' in Galatia.

The fact that Paul depicts the present condition of the Galatians as that of apostasy in contrast to the desirable state of affairs in the past shows how shaky a foundation on which the assumption of 'realized eschatology' stands. It is true that many of Paul's statements in the theological argument may be interpreted as divulging such intent. Frequently, however, the purpose of such theological talk is not immediately clear; its function changes drastically as its context changes. As Paul looks at the matter, then, it is not his intention at all to solve the crisis (apostasy) by affirming the sufficiency of the divine indicative established by the cross of Christ. Such a move would be meaningless anyway in the face of the fact that the Galatians themselves are

⁷² This is the function of Paul's 'reminders' in 1 Thessalonians and Philippians but *not* in

now *discarding* this very benefit.⁷³ Paul's claim is not that the Galatians have already possessed enough by their faith but that their present deviation from the truth is destroying everything they have attained thus far, *returning* them to the time before conversion/Christ. Hence Paul's reminders of their wonderful, normative beginning in the past, far from being expressions of his 'realized eschatological' outlook, function as polemical backdrop against which to accentuate the gravity of their present deviation.⁷⁴

3. Future in jeopardy: Paul's future eschatological perception of the crisis

Our last point was that Paul's depiction of the present situation in Galatia renders a realized eschatological outlook in Paul's argument quite unlikely. In this section we make a more positive point: Paul perceives the present crisis from an essentially future-oriented perspective. Namely, Paul considers the Galatians' deviation perilous precisely because it is an act which puts the future in jeopardy not only for themselves but also for Paul.

Paul's ministry becoming in vain (4:11)

Since the ultimate aim of Paul's ministry is to convert the Gentiles so that they may participate in God's eschatological salvation, their failure in reaching this goal necessarily means that Paul's ministry has also been 'in vain'. In 4:11 he expresses this fear of a possible failure of his ministry. In the context, Paul's fear of 'apostolic

Galatians.

⁷³ In Galatians, unlike in Romans, Paul does not appeal to the precedence of Abraham's justification to circumcision which would have been an effective evidence for the 'already' of justification. In the situation in which circumcision is making everything 'in vain' (4:8-11; 5:2-4), the talk of 'already' would have hardly been enough.

⁷⁴ The polemical nature of Paul's theological talk will be discussed in chapter seven.

toil'⁷⁵ being 'in vain' is quite apt, since the present backsliding of the Galatians is nothing but returning to their original state of slavery under the elements of the world from which Paul had converted them.

Here Paul's fear concerns his own ministry and not the well-being of his converts. Unlike most commentators who understand this as Paul's fear for his converts ('I am afraid for you'),⁷⁶ Gundry-Volf has shown that 'in the NT, the accusative object of φοβεῖσθαι never denotes the one for whose sake one fears, but always what or who inspires fear'. Here 'Paul expresses his concern for himself', his 'fear of personal loss, which is the primary aspect in the statements about laboring in vain'.⁷⁷ Thus, what the statement shows is not 'the note of love'⁷⁸ but his personal apprehension.

Paul's fear of his ministry becoming 'in vain' is a clear reflection of his eschatological outlook. When Paul says his ministry is 'in vain', he speaks 'from the perspective of the eschaton', pointing to 'the lack of divine commendation for service at the last day'.⁷⁹ In this respect, the expression, 'toil in vain' merges with 'running in vain' in 2:2, μή πως εἰς κενὸν τρέχω ἢ ἔδραμον (cf. 2 Bar. 44:10).⁸⁰ This way of speaking of his own ministry accords very well with Paul's own apostolic self-consciousness.

Most illuminating in this respect is Philippians 2:14-16: 'It is by your holding fast to the word of life that *I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labor in vain* (εἰς καύχημα ἔμοι εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ, ὅτι οὐκ εἰς κενὸν ἔδραμον

⁷⁵ For κοπιᾶω as referring to Paul's apostolic ministry see Rom 16:6, 12; 1 Cor 4:12; 15:10; 16:16; Phil 2:16; 1 Th 5:12; Col 1:29; Eph 4:28; 1 Tim 4:10; 5:17; 2 Tim 2:6. For the usage in LXX see Deut 32:47; Isa 49:4, 8; 45:18; 65:23. These passages are listed in Bjerkelund, 'Vergeblich' (1977) 179-82.

⁷⁶ *Contra* Witherington 302; Betz 219; Mußner 304; Bruce 207; Martyn 411 and most others.

⁷⁷ Gundry-Volf, *Perseverance* (1990) 266 and n. 33 there.

⁷⁸ Ebeling, *Truth* (1985) 224.

⁷⁹ Gundry-Volf, *Perseverance*, (1990) 263-64. She fruitfully builds on the study of Bjerkelund noted in n. 75 above.

⁸⁰ The difference between εἰς κενὸν and εἰς κῆν is immaterial.

οὐδὲ εἰς κενὸν ἐκοπίασα). Combining both ‘running’ and ‘toil’ images, Paul depicts his ministry from a distinctively eschatological perspective (cf. 1 Tim 4:10).⁸¹ Since his Christian existence itself is grounded on God’s will that he should preach the gospel (1:16), it is his performance as the apostle to the Gentiles that will be the criterion of his judgment on the Day of Christ (1 Th 2:19-20; 1 Cor 3:10-15; 9:16-17; 2 Cor 1:14). Thus the performance of his Gentile converts has a direct bearing on his own future: if they manage to stand ‘blameless’ before God, it will mean that he has not performed his ministry in vain, which will then be to him εἰς καύχημα (cf. 2 Cor 1:14; 1 Th 2:19).⁸² If he fails to carry out his ministry properly, the result is also manifest (1 Cor 9:16, 27).

Paul’s talk of his working ‘in vain’ makes immediate sense in the Galatian context in which the possibility of such failure is more tangible than ever. The unavoidable result of the present apostasy of the Galatians will be that he has ‘run in vain’. That is, it is not just for the Galatians that Paul is so anxious about the present situation. In a real sense, Paul also has his personal stake in the present crisis, which partly explains the unusual vehemence of his reaction.⁸³ In any case, here Paul’s anxiety is about the future, the inescapable eschatological implication of the Galatians’ deviation in the present. Their ‘foolishness’ lies not so much in their lack of appreciation of the ‘already’ as in their forsaking the proper path towards the Day of Christ.

Addressed to the Galatians, the implication of this statement for them is also clear. As Gundry-Volf notes, ‘the eschatological nature of the implications of ineffective labor for Paul shows that the implications for his converts are also eschatological:

⁸¹ So Lattke, *EDNT* 2:281.

⁸² So Gundry-Volf, *Perseverance*, (1990) 264.

⁸³ Cf. Hooker, *Adam* (1990) 49 on Phil 3:12-16 and 1 Cor 9:24-27.

they may be excluded from final salvation'.⁸⁴ Indeed this seems to be what Paul means when he applies the same motif of 'in vain' to the Galatians: 'have you suffered so much in vain?' (3:4) Combined with the eschatological motif of 'beginning and ending', the statement, as in the case of Paul's 'labouring in vain' (4:11), is to be taken in a future eschatological sense: 'failing to reach the intended goal'.⁸⁵ If the Galatians resort to the flesh and stop living with the Spirit, they will certainly be unable to attain the goal for which they have come to Christ, the hope of righteousness and eternal life. For the simple reason that they do not achieve the goal of their coming to Christ, their suffering thus far is rendered 'in vain'. Paul's point then is that 'abandonment of the Spirit excludes the possibility of ending'.⁸⁶ It is precisely for this reason that this statement can function as a warning exhortation for the defecting Galatians.⁸⁷

Beginning and ending (3:3)

According to Paul's own statement in 3:3, arguably the clearest depiction of the Galatian problem in the letter, the essence of the present crisis concerns the Spirit. The Galatians, having begun very well with the Spirit, are presently ending with the

⁸⁴ Gundry-Volf, *Perseverance* (1990) 267. She then tries to explain away this implication, asserting that Paul implies the possibility 'for the sake of argument only'. Her theological concern is understandable, but it should not override the plain meaning of Paul's statement. See Satake, 'Apostolat' (1968/69) 96-107; Betz 219.

⁸⁵ Mußner 210: 'ohne Erfolg'.

⁸⁶ Guthrie 93.

⁸⁷ Some interpreters read the ambiguous εἰ γε καὶ εἰκῇ as a word of encouragement rather than an exclamation of despair. E.g., Martyn 285; Dunn 157. Encouragement is, however, clearly out of place in the context of an unmitigated rebuke; the formulation itself is also odd for an encouragement. Its main function is certainly hortatory but its bleak implication remains. Burton 151 and others (Duncan 82; Schlier 125) advise us that we should read this 'without implication as to its fulfilment' but it certainly goes against the thrust of the passage. Paul is hopeful (Lightfoot 135-36; Hanson 82; Witherington 215), but this does not gloss over the grim reality he is facing (1:6; 3:3!).

flesh. This succinct depiction of the situation provides a very clear glimpse of Paul's perspective in the letter.

First of all, Paul's depiction of the Spirit-led life of the Galatians as a 'beginning' falsifies the supposition that Paul's interest in the Spirit in Galatians is motivated by his desire to stress the eschatological fulfilment the Spirit signifies.⁸⁸ If Paul had intended so, he would probably have avoided such an ineffective word 'beginning', and said instead, 'having been justified' (cf. Rom 5:1), or 'having received the inheritance through the Spirit'. The reception of the Spirit is surely important, indeed critical. Nevertheless, it is only a beginning, which should be continued until the end of the process.

More decisive is the motif of 'beginning/ending'. Paul's use of ἐπιτελέω has generated some debate. Some think that despite the intended contrast, Paul's concern is the continuing present status.⁸⁹ The point is well taken; Paul is speaking of the present behaviour of the Galatian believers. The contrasting force, however, cannot be explained away that easily since, juxtaposed with ἐναρξάμενοι, ἐπιτελείσθε necessarily delivers a clear sense of 'ending'. Some speculate that Paul is here borrowing from the 'cultic terms' of Hellenistic mystery religions.⁹⁰ Such an origin would be interesting if proved true, but it does not tell us much since we cannot assume that Paul uses the motif in the same way as it is used in the mystery cults.

Jewett, with many others, mirror-reads here the agitators' claim that they are to 'complete' the basic and rather inadequate message of Paul by supplementing the

⁸⁸ See 6.3 below.

⁸⁹ E.g., Mahoney, *EDNT* 2:42.

⁹⁰ E.g., Lightfoot 135; Schlier 124; Betz 133 n. 57 and 'Spirit' (1974) 147 and nn. 6-7; Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982) 79; Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 76 n. 13, 135 n. 7; Hume 46.

law.⁹¹ This makes Paul's remark a sarcastic reference to the empty promise of the agitators.⁹² It is not easy, however, to see how circumcision can be demanded in such a way. Circumcision was not a mark of the highest accomplishment but the *sine qua non* of the covenant membership; without it one does not become a second-rate Israelite but simply remains outside the covenant.⁹³ It is not possible to discover the theology of Paul's opponents at this point.⁹⁴

Another view is to take it as a sort of 'covenantal nomistic' logic: 'just as you have begun with the Spirit (getting in), so you have to continue in the Spirit' (staying in; going on).⁹⁵ The statement itself is perfectly acceptable, but it is doubtful that this is the idea expressed here. As is implied in vv. 4-5,⁹⁶ this 'beginning' covers the extended, albeit brief (1:6), period of the Spirit-filled life before the outbreak of the crisis (5:7). The intended contrast then is not a theological one between 'getting in' and 'continuing' but a historical one between the before and the after of the outbreak of the crisis.

Most probably, Paul's language of 'beginning/ending' is the reflection of his deep-rooted eschatological perspective, as is confirmed by the parallel in Philippians 1:6 where the Day of Christ is specified as the day of 'ending'.⁹⁷ The Galatians have

⁹¹ Jewett, 'Agitators' (1971) 206-7; Betz 136; Longenecker xcv, 104, 106; Martyn 285; Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 103; Barrett, *Freedom* (1985) 22; Keck, *Letters* (1989) 70-1; Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 17.

⁹² So Kertelge, 'Gesetz' (1984) 384.

⁹³ Fredriksen, 'Judaism' (1991) 536, 546. As Barclay, *Obedying* (1988) 49-50 (49) points out, 'we never find this "perfection" motif in the context of Hellenistic Jewish apologetic, where we would most expect it on Jewett's thesis'. Circumcision was the *sine qua non* of Jewishness, see Jos. *Ant.* 13.257-8, 318-9 and the famous conversion story of Izates in 20. 17-96. Cf. Mid. Rab. Genesis 46.11. See also Feldman/Reinhold, *Jewish Life* (1996) 124-135. Cf. Mußner 208 n. 21; and Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 88-89.

⁹⁴ Rightly, Hübner, *Law* (1984) 42 n. 1; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 89.

⁹⁵ See, e.g., Dunn 155-6; Barclay, *Obedying* (1988) 85; Longenecker 103-4; Witherington 214.

⁹⁶ This is pointed out by Dunn himself (157) and by Witherington 215.

⁹⁷ This parallel is frequently noted but with its eschatological thrust missed out. E.g. Dunn, *Baptism* (1970) 108; Bruce 149. See also 1 Cor 1:8: 'God will strengthen you until the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

begun very well with the Spirit. This does not mean, however, that they have reached the final goal of their calling. It is the parousia of Christ that marks the real ending of the story, with their hope of righteousness still outstanding.⁹⁸ So their disposition in the present time takes on an eschatological significance, affecting their eternal destiny. In this sense, the Galatians' present behaviour becomes an act of 'ending', that is, *an act which entails a necessary eschatological consequence*.⁹⁹

Having begun effectively with the Spirit, they are to 'be ending' (ἐπιτελείσθε, present) with the same Spirit so as to reach the final goal of eschatological salvation,¹⁰⁰ of course, not for the reason of mere consistency¹⁰¹ but for the simple reason that the Spirit is the only way of attaining to that hope. Yet, they are resorting to the law, and thereby falling to the realm of the flesh, the end of which will be destruction (6:8a). Either way, their present behaviour has a necessary implication for the final outcome, and in this sense, their present life is an act of ending.¹⁰² According to Paul's statement here, the problem of the Galatians then concerns their future: by allowing themselves to be persuaded by the circumcision propaganda, the Galatians are putting their eternal destiny at stake.

Benefit from Christ and the future (5:2-5)

Paul's futuristic perspective is also discernible in 5:2-5. The way Paul begins this warning is very impressive: 'Look, I, Paul, say to you'. The effect is, of course, 'to

⁹⁸ See chapter three.

⁹⁹ Thus, this statement anticipates 6:7-10, where Paul employs the imagery of sowing and reaping in relation to the Spirit to emphasize the necessary relation between the two.

¹⁰⁰ Rightly, Witherington 214.

¹⁰¹ *Contra* Longenecker 103. The problem is not just that the Galatians are inconsistent but that their new policy is a wrong one, since only the Spirit is able to sustain them to the end.

¹⁰² NIV is better than others: 'Are you now trying to *attain your goal* by human effort?'

give to what he is about to say all the weight of his personal influence'.¹⁰³ That Paul is here thinking of justification becomes clear in v. 4, where δικαιούσθε is related to the Galatians' willingness to receive circumcision: the Galatians are willing to be circumcised 'in order to be justified'. Paul's warning is that if they actually go ahead and do so, Christ will be of no use at all 'for their justification'. In v. 5 the alternative to this 'justification in the law' is presented: 'waiting for the hope of righteousness through the Spirit that comes from faith'. Thus, what we have here is the stark, and mutually exclusive presentation of 'the two methods of obtaining righteousness'.¹⁰⁴

The consequence of the Galatians' present defection is unambiguous: if the Galatians attempt to be justified in the law by receiving circumcision, they are then 'estranged from Christ' and 'cut off from grace' (v. 4). Using aorist verbs, Paul proleptically¹⁰⁵ visualizes the terrible consequence of their behaviour. Of course, this does not mean that 'the divine grace has been taken away from them..., but that they have abandoned it'.¹⁰⁶ Having chosen to be under the law-covenant by way of circumcision, their relationship with Christ has become inoperative; they are now outside the realm of Christ and grace. Naturally, it follows that for these 'Christ *will* be of no benefit (ὠφελήσει)!'.

While most interpreters simply ignore the future tense of this warning, some do take it as a reference to the final Judgement:¹⁰⁷ for those who are circumcised *now* Christ will not be of any help at the Last Judgement. This is, however, unlikely, especially since the idea of Christ interceding for believers at the Judgement is an idea otherwise missing in Paul (cf. Rom 8:27; John 17; 1 Jn 2:1; Heb 7:25). When Paul

¹⁰³ Burton 273; See also Schlier 231; Bruce 229.

¹⁰⁴ Burton 275; Gundry-Volf, *Perseverance* (1990) 210.

¹⁰⁵ So Bruce 231; Witherington 369.

¹⁰⁶ Burton 277. See also Gundry-Volf, *Perseverance* (1990) 212 and n. 51 there.

¹⁰⁷ E.g., Schlier 231; Betz 259; Martyn 469.

speaks of the Judgment, Christ performs the role of the Judge, and not the mediator for believers (2 Cor 5:10). It is also not to be ignored that for Paul God's Judgment is always in relation to human works (5:21b; 6:7-9).

In the context, the most likely reference is to 'the immediate consequences of receiving circumcision'.¹⁰⁸ 'If you are circumcised, *from now on* Christ will be of no benefit'. The point of Paul's warning is clear. Circumcision severs one's relation to Christ. Being outside Christ, one will receive no benefit from Christ in one's pursuit of justification; the only option left for them is the (illusory) justification in the law (v. 3). Those who receive circumcision, unlike 'us'¹⁰⁹ who resort to the Spirit, will forfeit their hope for future righteousness.

This passage provides further evidence for Paul's futuristic perspective from which he looks at the problem in Galatia. His worry is not that the Galatians, by receiving circumcision, may forfeit all the benefit from Christ that they have thus far received.¹¹⁰ His concern is that the Galatians will lose the benefit of Christ, that is, their freedom in the Spirit which comes from the work of Christ, and thereby be unable to adopt the proper way of 'waiting for the hope of righteousness', with the inevitable result of eternal destruction (6:8).

An aborted race (5:7)

Paul's futuristic and teleological thinking emerges quite clearly in 5:7 too. Using his favourite foot-race motif, Paul now compares the Galatians to 'runners in the stadium':¹¹¹ 'you were running well'. With 'running' denoting 'lifestyle' and

¹⁰⁸ Gundry-Volf, *Perseverance* (1990) 209. See also Burton 273; Longenecker 226, though his talk of 'Christ's guidance for one's life' ignores the context of justification.

¹⁰⁹ Martyn 103 perceives this polemical contrast.

¹¹⁰ Esler, *Galatians* (1998) 180 renders the statement in this way: '...if they become circumcised, Christ has been of no use to them', which requires an aorist or a perfect.

¹¹¹ Betz 264.

‘conduct’,¹¹² this remark is a clear reference to their life of ‘obeying the truth’ prior to the intrusion of the agitators, namely, their ‘beginning with the Spirit’ (3:3). The picture is that of runners pressing forward towards the goal still outstanding.¹¹³ Paul demands, ‘Who got in your path so that you might not obey the truth’? The reference is clearly to the agitators with a possible allusion to satanic force (3:1; 1 Th 2:18). As Pfitzner notes, here ἐγκόπτειν suggests ‘a breaking into or obstruction of the Galatian Christians in their course of following the “truth”’.¹¹⁴ The resultant picture is then that of ‘the runner who has allowed his progress to be blocked, or who is still running, but on the wrong course’.¹¹⁵ Long before they reach the goal, the Galatians have stopped their race of ‘obeying the truth’; they are running on a completely wrong course (cf. 1 Cor 9:24-26).¹¹⁶

Obviously, basic to the race imagery are a start *and* a finish. Conversion marks the beginning; the finish line is the day of Christ. After their Spirit-filled conversion, the Galatians had been running this race fairly well until the agitators caused them to falter. No doubt, the problem of aborting a race does not lie in stopping itself but in losing the prize for which they have been running. Paul’s point is clear: if you follow the agitators, you will never finish the race and get the prize! It is not that the Galatians are ignoring the prize they already have in Christ. For Paul the present deviation constitutes a serious danger because it means giving up the race that will lead the Galatians to the ultimate prize of final salvation.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Dunn 273.

¹¹³ So Ebel, *NIDNTT* 3:947.

¹¹⁴ *Agon* (1967) 136. See also Stählin, *TDNT* 3:857-60; DeVries, ‘Cutting’ (1975) 115-120; Betz 264; Longenecker 230; Bruce 234; Dunn 274.

¹¹⁵ Pfitzner, *Agon* (1967) 137.

¹¹⁶ So 2 Clement exhorts, ‘Let us run in the straight course...’ (2 Cl 20:2-3; cf. 7:1) to earn the ‘crown’ of ‘salvation’ and ‘eternal life’ (8:2-4).

¹¹⁷ This motif is also related to Paul’s exhortation in 6:9. There the image used in the immediate context is that of ‘sowing and reaping’, but the difference between the two is

Conclusion

How Paul looks at the problem in Galatia has become clear. First, the problem concerns the disposition of the Galatians, specifically, their apostatizing behaviour. Secondly, Paul reveals a very negative view of the present state of the Galatian converts, considering their behaviour as a degeneration to their pre-conversion status. This renders a 'realized eschatology' not only very unlikely, if not impossible, but also ineffective as a solution to the problem at hand. Thirdly, Paul assesses the significance of the present deviation in the light of their future: the Galatians, by deviating from the truth of the gospel, are jeopardizing their future hope.

The significance of these points for proper interpretation of Paul's theological argument is clear. If Paul perceives the situation from a future eschatological perspective, it is also highly likely that his theological argument too, which is part of his attempt to deal with the crisis, is framed in the same future eschatological perspective rather than that of realized eschatology as is usually thought. To demonstrate that this is indeed the case is the burden of the following chapters. By carefully following Paul's argument concerning justification and inheritance, and eliminating many unfounded assumptions usually made in reading it, we shall be able to reveal the distinctively future eschatological thrust of Paul's argument in the letter.

CHAPTER THREE

JUSTIFICATION AS AN END-TIME GIFT

1. Justification as the central issue in Galatians

Despite a few dissenting voices,¹ the centrality of justification in Galatians cannot be denied. Throughout the letter, in which diverse themes and motifs intermingle, the thesis of ‘justification by faith’ remains a major concern of Paul’s argument.

Wrapping up his autobiographical narrative, Paul begins his next major section of the letter (2:15-21) with the thesis of justification by faith. It is also with the theme of ‘the hope of righteousness’ (5:2-6) that Paul moves on to his appeal in more concrete terms. Within this section, with a view to impressing the truth of justification by faith he introduces the figure of Abraham into his argument (3:6-7), which develops further in terms of the ‘blessing of Abraham’ (3:8-9), and then, more polemically, of the ‘curse of the law’ (3:10-14). In 3:15-29, the twin themes of ‘promise-inheritance’, key concepts in Paul’s biblical exegesis, turn out to be biblical terms Paul utilizes to supplement his argument about justification (3:21, 24). As far as Paul himself is concerned, it is with respect to the question of justification that the present crisis takes on such critical importance: how does one attain to justification – by law or by faith?²

¹ E.g., Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 143: ‘an important sub-theme’ to show ‘the impotence of the law’, forming ‘a building block in his argument that works of the law do not bring the Spirit’. See also Stanley, ‘Curse’ (1990) 492-95; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 368-69; Witherington 175, 184. They cannot, however, explain properly the pervasiveness of justification language.

² So most interpreters, e.g., Becker, *Paulus* (1991) 294; Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982) 75, 87, 188; Patte, *Faith* (1983) 94, 209; Dunn, *Theology* (1993) 15. Cf. Schmithals, ‘Judaisten’ (1983) 47, 50.

It is often claimed that 'justification by faith' forms a common ground between Paul and his dialogue partners.³ This is not the case. The emphatic affirmation of the point coupled with a repeated denial of justification by the law necessitates the supposition that Paul is polemicizing against the false claim of 'justification by works of the law'. The conviction of justification by faith is certainly shared among the Jewish Christians in Antioch (2:16)⁴ and the Jerusalem 'pillars' (2:7-9). We should not, however, confuse these with the 'false brothers' (2:4) and the agitators in Galatia, the perverters of this very gospel (1:6-7). To be sure, 'justification by works of the law' does not seem to go along with 'covenantal nomism'. Given the diversity within early Judaism, however, why should the agitators necessarily be the same kind of Jews Sanders describes? Justification is *not* a common ground between Paul and his opponents.⁵

Since justification stands at the centre of Paul's argument, one's position on the subject determines one's understanding of Paul's argument as a whole. It is, therefore, not surprising that much scholarly discussion revolves around Paul's justification language. For example, is the concept forensic or ethical?⁶ Or is it 'apocalyptic'?⁷ Is

³ E.g., Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 68, 133, 143; Dunn, *Theology* (1993) 39, 55; Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982) 71.

⁴ Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 15 doubts even this.

⁵ Hong, 'Misrepresent' (1994) 182 ends up conceding that the agitators consider 'works of the law' as 'extra entrance requirements' for the Gentiles. For this reason Räisänen, *Law* (1983) 178-90 accuses Paul of distorting or misrepresenting the position of his opponents. But note the sober warning of Barrett, *Paul* (1994) 78; Kim, *Origin* (1984) 345. Many scholars resolve the tension by redefining the concept to suit their argument. E.g., Sanders (transfer terminology); Dunn (covenantal nomism). Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982) 71-72 divides the concept: initial justification (common ground) and justification of life (disputed).

⁶ For example, Luther and Bultmann think it forensic, while Schlier argues for the 'ethical'. Ziesler, *Righteousness* (1972) attempts a synthesis of both.

⁷ This view is associated with such scholars as Käsemann, 'Righteousness' (1969); Stuhlmacher, *Gerechtigkeit* (1966); Beker, *Paul* (1980); Keck, *Paul* (1988) 111-16; Martyn, *Issues* (1998) 141-56 and his *Galatians* (1998) 263-75; Campbell, *Rhetoric* (1992) 156-176 (Romans) and 'Coming' (1999).

its primary thrust individual or ecclesial/social?⁸ Is its function theological or sociological?⁹ Does the noun δικαιοσύνη have the same meaning as the verb δικαιοῦν?¹⁰ Discussion has been intensive.¹¹ It is not our aim to join the discussion at this point. The sheer diversity of the scholarly proposals suggests that the actual data is not unambiguous. In fact, these are not the questions Paul sets out to answer, at least not explicitly, which explains why Paul's statements are ambiguous, allowing diverse inferences according to the perspective one employs.

Under such circumstances, simply taking sides on these issues does not take us very far. We believe, however, that there is one crucial aspect of the subject to which scholars have hitherto paid insufficient attention: the conspicuously future-oriented nature of justification in Galatians. The question we ask in the present chapter is thus simple: is justification in Galatians realized or future? A proper answer to this question, we believe, will in fact obviate many of the thorny questions surrounding the subject, and thereby simplify our discussion to a significant degree, at least for the interpretation of Galatians.

2. The majority view

In Galatians, as in Romans, scholars detect the distinctiveness of Paul's view of justification in two respects. One obvious point is that it is only 'by faith' and never 'by works of the law'. This is immediately clear from the surface of Paul's discussion

⁸ Fung, Eckstein, Schlier and Mußner take it as a synonym of 'salvation', while Sanders, Räisänen and Hanson speak of 'inclusion' or 'transfer'.

⁹ For such scholars as Stendahl, *Paul* (1976); Sanders, *Law* (1983); Howard, *Crisis* (1991); Wolter, 'Ethos' (1997) 430-444; Theissen, *Reality* (1992) 222 it is a 'unity' language, while for Watson, *Paul* (1986) it is a call for 'separation'. Esler, *Galatians* (1998) is closer to Watson, though concern with identity is distinct.

¹⁰ E.g., Ziesler, *Righteousness* (1972) 147, 212; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 16-17.

¹¹ See Campbell, *Rhetoric* (1992) 138-156 and bibliography there.

and need not detain us. The problem we are interested in is the second ‘novelty’ that scholars ‘detect’: the present reality of justification.

In view of its strong nomistic connection, it seems that the Galatians, and the agitators behind them, are espousing the ‘traditional’ view of justification as an end-time event: at the final judgement God will justify or vindicate those who have been faithful to the law of Moses. Thus, for them justification is strictly a matter of future hope, inseparably bound up with the necessity of proper observance of the law (cf. 4QMMT 21.7; b. Qid 30b).¹² Then, it is as the *sine qua non* for this future justification that they demanded ‘works of the law’ of the Galatians (cf. 5:4).

Over against this future eschatological justification predicated on circumcision/law, so runs the argument, Paul’s insistence that justification is ‘by faith’ (2:16) and ‘in Christ’ (2:17, 21) also involves an important corollary. Since ‘faith’ focuses on the cross and resurrection of Christ in the past, and since believers are already ‘in Christ’ by faith, saying that justification is ‘by faith’ is in fact another way of claiming that ‘believers’ have already been justified by their ‘faith’. For those in Christ, then, the hoped-for gift of justification has already become a present reality.¹³

¹² For Jewish understanding of justification, see Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation* (1986) 72; *idem*, *Theologie* 1 (1992) 330; Kertelge, *Rechtfertigung* (1966) 41; *idem*, *EDNT* 1:331; Becker, *Paulus* (1998) 49-53; Dunn 267-268; Käsemann, *Romans* (1980) 56-57. For the eschatological orientation of the time, see Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 89-91, 232. Even in Paul future justification remains strong. Rom 2:1-16; 5:19; 1Cor 4:4; Gal 5:5; Phil 3:12 (P⁴⁶ and some Western witnesses). Cf. Jas 2:14-26.

¹³ With respect to Paul’s teaching on justification in general, see Scot, *Christianity* (1961) 56-59; Bultmann, *Theology* (1951) 270; Conzelmann, *Outline* (1969) 217; Ridderbos, *Paul* (1975) 161-166; Ladd, *Theology* (1974) 437-447; Schrenk, *TDNT* 2:205; Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 232-3. Käsemann, while insisting on the context of future eschatology, nevertheless concedes that Paul does put a strong stress on the present nature of justification. ‘Righteousness of God’ (1961) 168-82. For those who posit a pre-Pauline, Jewish-Christian view of justification, this innovation precedes Paul. E.g., Vielhauer, ‘Gesetzesdienst’ (1975) 51-55; Reumann, *Righteousness* (1982) 55; Martyn, *Issues* (1997) 141-156. Less polemical as it may be, however, the present reality of justification in Paul remains the same.

This is indeed a bold claim to make. Naturally, for many interpreters, it is this claim of the *present* reality of justification that carries the sharpest edge in Paul's polemical exposition of the theme. By pointing to the present reality of justification gained through faith, Paul pulls the rug from under the feet of his opponents who are holding this gift back from the Galatians on the condition of circumcision. In effect, then, Paul's question to the Galatians is: 'having already been justified by faith without any help from the law, why are you still trying to be justified by the law?' The brunt of Paul's criticism then falls on the absurdity of Galatian believers' *gratuitous* attempt to be justified by the law after having already been justified by faith.¹⁴

The purpose of this chapter is to show that this interpretation is unfounded. To be sure, this widespread view certainly has a *prima facie* plausibility. One gains this impression, however, not from Galatians itself but from Romans where the 'now' of justification is explicitly and repeatedly affirmed. It seems that one simply carries this impression over to Galatians, assuming that Paul speaks of justification in the same vein.¹⁵ This, however, runs the risk of distorting the specific contextual message Paul intends to make in Galatians.¹⁶

Paul's view of 'justification as a present reality' is often traced back to Paul's Damascus experience. E.g., Bornkamm, 'Revelation' (1974) 90-103; Kim, *Origin* (1984) 269-311; Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation* (1986) 68-93, 134-68.

¹⁴ So, Fung 225; Kruse, *Law* (1996) 75; Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 139-40; Emphatic or not, the present reality of justification forms a consensus. Most scholars connect justification with the Spirit, which in turn marks the realization of the promised inheritance.

¹⁵ Frequently, scholarly discussion of justification in Galatians is heavily assisted by the data in Romans. E.g., Schlier; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996); Smiles, *Gospel* (1998). Becker, *Paulus* (1998) 228 calls Galatians the 'Vorbote des Römerbriefes' and 'die kleine Römerbrief'. See also Martyn, *Issues* (1998) 37-45.

¹⁶ The contextual nature of Galatians is a popular menu on scholarly discussion of Paul, but 'justification' seems to fail to receive its due share. But see Hübner, *Law* (1984) 124-137. Even Beker, who is most eloquent on this, fails to discuss it in his comparison of Romans and Galatians. If he had done so, he would have found that it falsifies his reading of Galatians as a document of 'realized eschatology'.

The present chapter consists in three levels of argument. The grammatical and exegetical analysis (section 3) examines Paul's actual statements on the theme, focusing on the question of the 'when' of justification. This will be followed by a broader consideration designed to see how the theme functions within Paul's overall argument (section 4). At this point, we shall conduct a brief comparison with the data in Romans. Then, we shall evaluate the significance of the result of our investigation within the broader context of the Galatians crisis (section 5).

3. Grammatical and exegetical considerations

Not by works of the law but by faith (2:15-21)

We begin with 2:15-21, the first, and programmatic, statement of the theme.¹⁷ Our purpose is not to provide a detailed exegesis of the section¹⁸ but to examine Paul's justification language with special attention to its temporal aspect.

Paul's statement in v. 16 sums up the gist of his argument, repeating the verb δικαιοῦν no less than three times. V. 16a provides the ground for the statement in v. 16b: εἰδότες [δὲ] ὅτι οὐ δικαιούται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου¹⁹ ἐάν μὴ²⁰

¹⁷ Schlier 87-88; Betz 114; Longenecker 80-81; Fung 112.

¹⁸ Beside commentaries, see Bultmann, 'Auslegung' (1967) 394-399; Klein, 'Individualgeschichte' (1969) 181-202; U. Wilckens, *Rechtfertigung* (1974) 77-109 (84-94); Kümmel, 'Individualgeschichte' (1978) 130-142; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 3-81; Smiles, *Gospel* (1998).

¹⁹ The meaning of this phrase is debated. See the survey in Hanson, *Abraham* (1989) 117-119. This is the *crux interpretum* of Dunn's 'New Perspective'. See his 'New Perspective' and 'Works of the Law' in his *Law* (1990) 183-214 and 215-241. Cf. Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 119-128. But see Moo, 'Law' (1983) 73-100 (91-96); Räisänen, 'Break' (1985) 544, 548. In view of Paul's relentless moral demand together with the obvious abolition of such aspects as circumcision, food laws, and calendar regulations, we find the traditional distinction between moral and ceremonial closest to Paul's intention. So, Augustine, Marius Victorinus (Edwards 36, 40).

²⁰ Dunn's attempt to reconstruct the process from initial 'qualification' to outright 'denial' is far-fetched. 135-38 and *Law* (1990) 195-196. Rightly, Martyn, *Issues* (1997) 141-142 n. 3.

διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.²¹ Paul uses here the present indicative passive form of δικαιοῦν. Without any specific time indicator, the statement makes a general and ‘timeless’ theological claim about the means of justification: justification is not ‘by works of the law’ but ‘by faith in Jesus Christ’.²² The present δικαιούται is, then, clearly gnomic, as the intentionally general ἄνθρωπος makes clear. The participle εἰδότες,²³ specifying the statement as the motivating ‘belief’ of Jewish Christians, further strengthens its gnomic thrust. Thus, one cannot take this statement as giving evidence of the present nature of justification.²⁴ Paul’s express purpose in this statement is to define the terms of justification (‘how’); other aspects of justification are not in view here.

So ‘we’ knew the truth and believed in Jesus accordingly. The purpose of this believing is already clear but Paul now brings it to the surface: ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου (v. 16b). The verb δικαιωθῶμεν, being an (aorist) subjunctive, does not in itself have any tense. The matter is not so simple, however, since this purpose statement, coupled with the aorist ἐπιστεύσαμεν, which supposedly governs the purpose clause too, is frequently taken to imply the realized

²¹ This is another issue of lively debate. See the bibliography in Bruce 138-9. With Bruce, Dunn and Hanson, we take the ‘objective genitive’ position. See, most recently, Matlock, ‘De-theologizing’ (2000) 1-23. The ‘subjective’ reading is proposed by Hays, *Faith* (1983); Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 95-115; D. Campbell, ‘Coming’ (1999) and commentaries such as Longenecker, Williams, Martyn and Witherington.

²² So Bultmann, *Theology* (1951) 274; Mußner 170. Cf. Ziesler, *Righteousness* (1972) 172. NEB makes this gnomic thrust clearer by adding ‘ever’.

²³ Historically problematic as it may be, Jewish Christians’ ‘recognition’ precedes their believing Christ. *Contra* Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 13.

²⁴ *Contra* Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 17, who, based on the present tense of δικαιοῦν, insists that ‘der Gegenwartscharacter der Rechtfertigungsaussagen ist unbestreitbar’. For this, instructively, he resorts to Rom 3:28. But even there the same generalizing ἄνθρωπος suggests a gnomic thrust.

nature of justification. The logic runs: one is justified by faith; we believed, and therefore we have been justified.²⁵

This reasoning would be legitimate if believing is a punctiliar action completed in the past. For Paul, however, believing typically refers to a life disposition with which believers maintain their life toward God: ‘And the life I now live in the flesh I *live by faith* in the Son of God’ (2:20).²⁶ The idea that faith works itself out through love (5:6) also conveys the same point.²⁷ Hence the aorist ἐπιστεύσαμεν should be ingressive, denoting the inception of one’s life in faith: ‘began to believe’ or ‘decided to believe’.²⁸ Faith in Christ still continues; we cannot assume that the purpose of believing, i.e., justification, has already been fulfilled unless Paul explicitly affirms it.

In contrast to most interpreters, Betz thinks that Paul has a definite eschatological justification in view here: ‘The clause also indicates that justification remains a matter of hope, and is not in any way a present guarantee’.²⁹ While agreeing with his general view of future justification, we maintain that the idea is not explicit in the present statement.

V. 16c reiterates the idea in v. 16a, now in the negative terms, ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ. Paul’s use of the future indicative (δικαιωθήσεται) prompts many interpreters to find future eschatological justification in this clause.³⁰ Though this reading certainly confirms our view, there is reason to be cautious here. The clause is a quotation from Ps 143:2 (LXX 142:2). It is possible that Paul, with

²⁵ So Räisänen, ‘Break’ (1985) 545; Martyn 271; Kertelge, *Rechtfertigung* (1966) 128.

Longenecker 85: ‘For while the aorist ἐπιστεύσαμεν (“we believed”) of v. 16 refers to a once-for-all response that results in a transfer of status (ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν)’.

²⁶ Keck, *Letters* (1988) 51 says that faith as trust has ‘a moral quality’ to it.

²⁷ So Cousar 117.

²⁸ Rightly, Suhl, ‘Galaterbrief’ (1987) 3099; Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 129; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 20. *Contra* Schlier 94: ‘das einmalige und fixierbare Ereignis des Gläubigwerden, das mit der Taufe zusammenfällt’.

²⁹ Betz 118.

³⁰ So Martyn 254; Betz 119; Silva, ‘Eschatological’ (1994) 148; Witherington 183-184.

other Jews, acknowledged the future justification expressed in the Psalm, but it is difficult to prove that he actually has this in mind at this particular point. Paul also cites the same passage in Rom 3:20 with the same future verb, but now to refer to the justification which most probably refers to a reality already revealed (3:21, 24; cf. 19-20). This makes us wary of loading too much on the future tense of the verb.³¹

Taken together, this densely packed statement in v. 16 does not provide any explicit indication about the temporal aspect of justification. As the threefold repetition of ‘by works of the law’ and ‘by faith in Christ’ indicates, Paul’s manifest purpose here is to clarify the ‘how’ of justification and nothing else.

Having stated the common ground of justification by faith, Paul in v. 17 goes on to criticize Peter’s violation of this ‘truth of the gospel’.³² ‘But if, seeking to be justified (ζητοῦντες δικαιωθῆναι) in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!’ Interestingly enough, Paul here combines justification with the idea of ‘seeking’. This present participle ζητοῦντες, connected to ‘were found sinners’ (εὐρέθημεν), seems to distinguish itself from the aorist ἐπιστεύσαμεν in v.16 which traces back to the time of conversion.³³ As Tannehill rightly maintains, ‘being found sinners’ most probably refers to the situation in Antioch, and thus, the ‘seeking’ here must be a reference to ‘the life of faith which Paul, and those with him, have been leading’.³⁴ Even if the ‘seeking’ is connected to ἐπιστεύσαμεν, the idea of ‘being found sinners’ makes clear that the reference is to the situation *after* conversion, that is, their situation in Christ. Paul considers Jewish

³¹ So Esler 142. The comment of Hill, *Greek Words* (1967) 141 is not justified: ‘What is a matter of hope for the Jews becomes for Paul a present possibility and reality’.

³² The structure of the whole passage is debated. See also 7.3 below.

³³ Paul never says that believing Christ makes one a sinner. *Contra* Burton 125, 127; Schlier 95; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 32; Lambrecht, ‘Reasoning’ (1996) 58; Klein, ‘Individualgeschichte’ (1969) 190. Cf. Wilckens, *Rechtfertigung* (1974) 90.

³⁴ Tannehill, *Dying* (1967) 56. See also Soards, ‘Seeking’ (1989) 237-254, who notices this but reads an unnecessary negative note into Paul’s words.

Christians in Christ including himself as seeking to be justified, i.e., yet to be justified.³⁵ If justification is what believers still seek to attain in Christ, this means that justification remains a future eschatological gift. 'Paul has come to faith, and as a believer he *awaits* justification by faith in Christ'.³⁶

Paul's description of 'life in faith' in vv. 19-20 is mostly taken as evidence for the present reality of justification.³⁷ Some, assuming that v. 17 is a sort of Jewish Christian objection to the Pauline version of justification, take it as Paul's rebuttal designed to demonstrate the moral character of 'justified life'.³⁸ Assuming a realized justification, however, is certainly begging the question. In this case, scholars are frequently misled by the false analogy in Romans, where Paul actually answers a (possible) charge posed against him by defining the *present* justification in terms of 'death in relation to sin' (6:2, 11) and 'life in relation to God' (6:4, 11, 13).³⁹ But the issue in Galatians is certainly different from that in Romans; the former speaks of 'death to the law' and the latter 'death to sin'.⁴⁰ Most of all, it would be really strange if Paul is forced to defend his doctrine against a possible criticism even *before* he has

³⁵ Otherwise, we may speculate, he would probably have said: 'But, if, having been justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners....'

³⁶ Kertelge, *EDNT* 1:331 (emphasis added). Also Betz 119; Tannehill, *Dying* (1967) 56; Dunn 141. Even Martyn 254 acknowledges that this phrase, together with the future verb in 2:16c, refers to 'the sure hope of ultimate rectification'. It is particularly instructive to note that both Feld, 'Diener' (1973) 126 and Bouwman, 'Diener' (1979) 17, recognizing the futuristic force of this sentence, have to brand v. 17 as 'unpaulinisch'.

³⁷ This is the consensus. See e.g., Ziesler, *Righteousness* (1972) 174; Vos, *Pneumatologie* (19) 28, 90 and *passim*; Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982) 67; Esler, *Galatians* (1998) 172.

³⁸ This is the majority view. E.g., Schlier 95-104; Wengst, *Formeln* (1972) 80; Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 146-154, 163-185; Esler, *Galatians* (1998) 171-2, 186; Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 113-5; Silva, 'Eschatological' (1994) 149. Longenecker 80-96 speaks of vv. 15-16 as showing the 'forensic' and vv. 19-20 the 'ethical' aspect of justification, with v. 21 taking both up. This is reminiscent of Ziesler, *Righteousness* (1972) 173-4. Cf. Bultmann, 'Auslegung' (1967) 394-99; Dahl, *Studies* (1977) 109.

³⁹ Schlier 98-100; Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 168-77. When engaged in diatribe, Paul is usually very explicit. See Rom 3:9; 6:1.

⁴⁰ Schlier (100) himself notes this. See also Ebeling, *Truth* (1985) 132.

established the doctrine itself properly.⁴¹ And the lack of any such concern in his later discussion of the subject (3:6-9, 10-14, 23-24) also renders the postulation of 'defence' quite spurious.

Others, objecting to the 'ethical' interpretation, take it to be a 'christological-soteriological' affirmation depicting the 'eschatological life as such'.⁴² 'Resurrection life'⁴³ and the life of the 'new age'⁴⁴ are also frequently invoked. Again, these are ideas not found in the text itself. Paul's interest in Christ is sharply focused on his death rather than his resurrection.⁴⁵ Paul also says that 'Christ living in me' means his living ἐν σαρκί,⁴⁶ with the contrast being between two different ways of living one's 'fleshly life': ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ (1:13) or ἐν Χριστῷ. Paul's use of similar language in other letters also confirms this (Phil 1:20-23; 2 Cor 4:10-11; 5:14-15). The concluding verse in v. 21 also suggests that vv. 19-20 too are part of Paul's argument about the means of justification rather than its follow-up, supposedly explaining the ethical nature of justification. Furthermore, vv. 19-20 are not intended as an objective 'christological' or 'eschatological' statement but as Paul's personal, and polemical for that matter, manifesto of his life-disposition now oriented to Christ.⁴⁷ Within the context, it polemically depicts Paul's unwavering disposition of 'seeking to be justified in Christ' over against Peter's deviation from the truth of the gospel.⁴⁸ In sum,

⁴¹ The Antioch incident itself concerns the table fellowship, not the doctrine of justification. It is Paul who brings in the subject, branding Peter's 'table manner' as a denial of justification by faith.

⁴² E.g., Cosgrove, *Cross* (1998) 140; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 57; Fung 123.

⁴³ E.g., Styler, 'Obligation' (1973) 181-83; Silva, 'Eschatological' (1994) 149; Martyn 258-9. See the sober observation in Keck, *Letters* (1989) 57.

⁴⁴ E.g., Dunn 145; Mußner 182-3; Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982) 75.

⁴⁵ See also 7.3 below.

⁴⁶ Martyn 258-9 rightly sees here a note of 'eschatological reservation'.

⁴⁷ Rightly Duncan 72; Ridderbos 106-7; Witherington 190; Davies, *Rabbinic* (1959) 197.

⁴⁸ The contrast between the Jewish Christians and Paul parallels 5:2-5, where those attempting to be justified in the law are contrasted to 'us' waiting for the hope of righteousness πνεύματι ἐκ πίστεως.

vv. 19-20 do not describe the nature of justification but of *faith* as the proper means to justification, stressing that faith in Christ cannot allow any room for the law.

In v. 21 Paul clinches his argument by referring to the death of Christ: ‘I do not nullify the grace of God. For if righteousness (δικαιοσύνη)⁴⁹ is through the law, then Christ would have died to no purpose’. With an elliptical construction only with a noun and an adjectival phrase, Paul’s concentration on the ‘how’ becomes even clearer: justification is not ‘through the law’. The statement is clearly hypothetical, contradictory to the fact,⁵⁰ and thus does not tell us anything positive about justification except that it is not ‘through the law’. Paul affirms that the death of Christ is somehow the source of justification, but beyond that he does not explain it any further. This rather ambiguous statement on the role of Christ’s death confirms once more that Paul’s central concern here is to make the negative claim that justification is never ‘by the law’.⁵¹

Abraham and justification

In 3:6 Paul brings in the story of Abraham for the first time by citing Genesis 15:6 (LXX) almost *verbatim*: ‘Just as (καθώς) Abraham believed (ἐπίστευσεν) God, and it was reckoned (ἐλογίσθη) to him as righteousness (εἰς δικαιοσύνην)’. The fact that Paul begins his exposition of Abraham tradition with Abraham’s justification indicates that justification is the central issue he has in mind.⁵² In Paul’s quotation, as

⁴⁹ The easy switch from the noun and the verb in 2:16-21, 3:19-24 and 5:4-5 makes any attempt to distinguish between the noun/adjective and the verb artificial (see n. 10). Rightly, Dunn, *Law* (1990) 207; Esler, *Galatians* (1998) 141-42. See now Moor, ‘δικαιοσύνη’ (1998) 27-43. Our view of a future eschatological justification renders such a distinction irrelevant.

⁵⁰ Rightly, Barrett, *Paul* (1994) 78: ‘the ultimate *reductio ad absurdum*’.

⁵¹ Ambrosiaster here speaks of ‘a future life’. Edwards 33.

⁵² *Contra* those who connect v. 6 to 3:2-5, making it a scriptural proof for receiving the Spirit ‘by faith’. Stanley, ‘Curse’ (1990) 494-5 (but see 508); Fung 136; Williams, ‘Justification’ (1987) 92-3; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 390 n. 84; Kruse, *Law* (1996) 77. It is the ‘obvious’ reality of the Spirit that proves the ‘controversial’ justification by faith, not *vice versa*.

in the original LXX, God's reckoning is put in the aorist (ἐλογίσθη), indicating that Abraham was in fact justified. The point is clear: Abraham believed God's promises, and therefore God reckoned this as his righteousness, namely, he was justified. Some people take this to be an unmistakable reference to the realized nature of justification in Galatians.⁵³ One has to be cautious, however. This verse is part of the quotation brought in for the purpose of analogy (καθώς) and *not* part of Paul's own statement about justification.⁵⁴ In using Abraham as a paradigm, Paul's interest is limited to the necessary connection between faith and justification, without any intention of reading its present reality out of the 'already' of Abraham's justification.⁵⁵ His own conclusion in v. 7 does not make any such claim. In fact, it does not use a *dik-* word at all. What Paul picks up from the Abraham analogy is the inseparable tie between faith and justification, no more and no less.

3:8-9 furthers the argument in 3:6-7, now utilizing the biblical term of 'blessing'. As he speaks of the Scripture's foreknowledge of justification by faith, Paul uses a present indicative verb with God as its subject: ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοῖ τὰ ἔθνη ὁ θεός (v. 8a). Here too, the present tense expresses 'God's abiding policy'⁵⁶ that he justifies the Gentiles by faith, with no clear indication of its temporal aspect.⁵⁷

⁵³ E.g. Ziesler, *Righteousness* (1972) 180. For Barrett too, *Freedom* (1985) 64, this is the only evidence he can adduce in Galatians for realized justification. Also Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 95-96, who considers 3:6 (Gen 15:6) as the fulfilment for Abraham of the 'promise of blessing' quoted in 3:8 (Gen 12:3; 18:18), which has also been fulfilled for the Gentile believers in the form of the Spirit.

⁵⁴ Rightly, Yinger, *Judgment* (1999) 167.

⁵⁵ In Romans 4 Abraham's justification *before* his circumcision is crucial for Paul. However, the conclusion that Paul draws from ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ (4:23) is not that we too have been justified but that it is δι' ἡμᾶς οἷς μέλλει λογίζεσθαι (4:24), showing that he has no intention of capitalizing on the *time* of Abraham's justification.

⁵⁶ Bruce 156; Burton 160.

⁵⁷ *Contra* Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 110, who takes it as 'realen Gegenwart'. Once again, his resort to Romans is noteworthy. Dunn 164 sees a 'deliberate ambiguity', allowing the possibility of 'final justification'. In this way, he speaks of 'God's acceptance...from start to finish', which suits his claim of 'covenantal nomism'.

To offer further scriptural support for his thesis, Paul now appeals to God's oracle of 'blessing' (Gen 12:3; 18:18), thereby defining the Abrahamic blessing in terms of justification (v. 8b).⁵⁸ Taking up the gnomic thrust of v. 8a, the conclusion is also put in a gnomic present: 'so that those of faith are blessed (εὐλογοῦνται) together with believing/faithful Abraham' (v. 9). The present passive indicative of εὐλογέω, which is very rare in the NT, is never used to describe the result of blessing, for which the passive participle εὐλογημένος is invariably used. In the NT the only other use of the present passive indicative form is found in Heb 7:7, also in a gnomic sense: χωρὶς δὲ πάσης ἀντιλογίας τὸ ἕλαττον ὑπὸ τοῦ κρείττονος εὐλογεῖται. As in the case of justification, the present tense is explained by Paul's focus on the question of 'means', and not, as Eckstein asserts, by Paul's realized eschatological intention to speak of 'das gegenwärtige Gesegnetwerden durch Gott'.⁵⁹ This verse is just another way of saying that 'those of faith are justified' as Abraham was justified by his faith.

However, things are more complicated in 3:14, the conclusion of the whole argument in 3:6-14. Here the blessing of the Gentiles is affirmed once more, now as the purpose of Christ's redemption: 'so that the blessing of Abraham might reach the Gentiles'. This conclusion is followed by another ἵνα clause presenting the gift of the Spirit as result of the Christ event: 'so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit'. If we take the double ἵνα clause as coordinates expressing the same reality,⁶⁰ it then means that the 'blessing' is identified, or at least, coincides, with the Spirit, the gift the Galatians already received at the time of their conversion (3:1-5). If this is the case,

⁵⁸ Rightly, Chrysostom; Augustine; Williams, 'Justification' (1987) 91-100; Hong, *Law* (1993) 131; Witherington 228; Burton 175. *Contra* Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 50-51, 60-63 and 'Arguing' (1988) 547 n. 1 who denies such equation. But see Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 393.

⁵⁹ Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 118. Cf. Duncan 91.

⁶⁰ So Schlier 140; Mußner 234-36; Bruce 167; Longenecker 123; Dunn 179; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 163; Martyn 321. A minor group of scholars considers v. 14b as dependent on v. 14a. Duncan 103; Betz 152; Bligh, *Greek* (1966) 139.

it then follows that justification, represented by the ‘blessing’, already happened for the Gentile believers as they came to faith.⁶¹

It has to be admitted that, grammatically speaking, this is a very plausible interpretation of 3:14, where double clauses are juxtaposed side by side. There are, however, other things to consider before we rush to such a conclusion. First, the argument in 3:6-14 as a whole concerns the claim that justification is by faith. The initial statement in 3:6-7, first followed by the scriptural argument in terms of ‘blessing’ (vv. 8-9), is then developed into an antithetical argument of ‘curse and blessing’ based on the redemption of Christ (vv. 10-13). Read in this way, it is not the whole v. 14 but only v. 14a that rounds up the argument begun at v. 6, proving why the blessing of justification comes to Gentiles ‘in Christ’, namely, ‘not by works of the law’. Paul’s reference to the Spirit is a new development, intended to connect the whole argument (vv. 6-14a) with the ‘fact’ of the Spirit the Galatians themselves have received (vv. 1-5).⁶² By this deliberate association, Paul brings in the Spirit as the experiential support for his argument of justification by faith. That is, the Spirit-clause is a somewhat loose addition to the argument proper (vv. 6-14a) to boost the force of his claim of ‘by faith’. We should not, therefore, mingle the two clauses into a single statement.⁶³

Secondly, the Galatians who wish to be justified in the law (5:4) certainly do not consider their experience of the Spirit as evidence of their justification. Paul’s identification of justification and the reception of the Spirit would have been as much

⁶¹ This is the consensus. See, among others, Williams, ‘Justification’ (1987) 91-100. Dahl, *Studies* (1977) 133; Vos, *Pneumatologie* (1973) 108; Hanson, *Abraham* (1988) 116; Cousar, *Cross* (1990) 117.

⁶² Cf. Luz, *Geschichtsverständnis* (1968) 148; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 163. Structurally, 3:14a corresponds to 3:6-14, and 3:14b to 3:1-5 which does *not* belong to the scriptural argument. See also 7.4 below.

⁶³ *Contra* Esler, *Galatians* (1998) 175 who takes both as ‘alternative ways of saying the same thing’.

a surprise to the Galatians as it was important for Paul's case. If this had indeed been Paul's intention, then he would have been more explicit, probably providing a proper explanation. That he fails to supply one suggests that Paul has no intention of making such a point.

Thirdly, in Galatians Paul *never* specifies the Spirit as a concomitant of justification.⁶⁴ Certainly they are brought together quite closely, but never equated. On the contrary, when Paul becomes explicit, he presents the Spirit as the *means* with which or *mode* in which believers wait for their future justification (5:5).

Given these considerations, equating justification/blessing with the gift of the Spirit creates more problems than it solves. Close as they certainly are, justification and the gift of the Spirit do not coincide. The Spirit has certainly come; Paul never says, however, that justification has too.

In 3:11 Paul uses δικ-words twice, once in the quotation of Habbakuk 2:4 and the other in his own explanatory comment. The present indicative in v. 11a is gnomic, stating the 'timeless' truth that no one is justified by the law.⁶⁵ The gnomic character is easily confirmed by the declarative conjunction ὅτι at the beginning of the clause and the predicate δῆλον, which is most probably connected to the preceding clause.⁶⁶ Also noteworthy is the categorical οὐδεὶς, which nicely corresponds to ἄνθρωπος and πᾶσα σὰρξ in 2:16.⁶⁷

Paul's use of Habbakuk is somewhat problematic. Paul's text reads: 'The one who is righteous (ὁ δίκαιος) by faith will live'. Scholars debate whether the prepositional phrase ἐκ πίστεως should be connected to the verb ζήσεται, or to the subject

⁶⁴ Even in Romans, where justification must coincide with receiving the Spirit, Paul does not bring the two together.

⁶⁵ Rightly, Bultmann, *Theology* (1951) 274.

⁶⁶ So Mußner 228.

⁶⁷ So Mußner 228; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 134-35.

ὁ δίκαιος. According to the former, the sentence reads: 'The righteous one shall live by faith',⁶⁸ while the latter gives the meaning provided above.⁶⁹ Either way, Paul's reference to 'the righteous one' is often taken as implying the present nature of justification⁷⁰ since it is clear that in its original context the passage does speak of the one who is actually righteous.

Once again, however, we should not squeeze the cited OT text as if it were part of Paul's own, carefully nuanced, statement. As in the case of Abraham's justification (3:6; Gen 15:6), Paul's purpose in appealing to this particular text is clearly defined, as is explicitly stated in his own interpretive comment: 'Now it is evident that through the law no one is justified before God' (v. 11a).⁷¹ From the first, Paul's singular concern is to explain the 'how' of justification and nothing more.⁷² Thus, to prove that justification is not by the law but only by faith, he appeals to a text where justification language is combined with the idea of faith. Paul is not stating how justified people should 'live'. As in the case of the story of Abraham, what Paul looks for in the Scripture is the exclusive bond between faith and justification.⁷³

By and large Paul's discussion of the Abraham tradition from 3:15 onwards is carried out in terms of 'promise' and 'inheritance' rather than 'justification'. δικ- words do occur, however, at two significant junctures in Paul's argument. The noun is used in 3:21: 'Is the law then against⁷⁴ the promises? Certainly not! For if a law had

⁶⁸ So AV; NASB; Mußner 227. The Messianic readings of Hays, *Faith* (1983) 150-157 and Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 57 are misleading since, as Dunn 174 points out, v. 11b answers to the statement in v. 11a ('no one').

⁶⁹ So RSV; NEB; Hübner, *Law* (1984) 19, 43-44 n. 15; also Fung 143-145 with detailed discussion.

⁷⁰ E.g., Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 142; Ziesler, *Righteousness* (1972) 176; Fung 145.

⁷¹ Cf. Burton 166.

⁷² So Reumann, *Righteousness* (1982) 57-8. Cf. Ziesler, *Righteousness* (1972) 177 n. 1.

⁷³ In this sense, the view of Sanders that Paul's argument here is 'terminological' has a grain of truth. *Law* (1983) 21-27; *Paul* (1991) 56.

⁷⁴ Unlike Dunn 192, the point is the impotence of the law, not its consistency with the promise. Rightly, Martyn 358-59 and *Issues* (1998) 167 n. 15.

been given that could make alive, righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) would indeed come from the law' (NRSV). Clearly, Paul assumes that the law has no power 'to give life' (ζωοποιῆσαι). And if this protasis is definitely wrong, it then follows that what is stated in the apodosis is also wrong. Since the law is not 'life-giving', righteousness cannot come from the law. Here the precise meaning of 'to give life' is debated. Some think it refers to eternal life, while a majority of interpreters opt for the present life given in Christ.⁷⁵ Whichever it means, however, it does not necessarily determine the 'when' of justification. In the former view ('eternal life'), righteousness could easily be construed as future eschatological, but even in the latter case, it does not necessitate the idea of realized justification since there is no ground for thinking that Paul equates life with justification.⁷⁶ Then it would simply mean that the law cannot bring in (future) righteousness since it is now failing to give people genuine life which is essential in receiving future justification (2:20-21; 5:5-6, 25!; cf. 6:7-9). Of course, this futuristic meaning is not explicit within this statement itself, but it is equally true that it does not evidence the present reality of righteousness either.

In 3:24, the verb δικαιοῦν is used in the subjunctive: 'Thus the law was our *paidagogos* unto Christ, so that we might be justified (δικαιωθῶμεν) by faith'. Here Paul, by attributing an utterly negative function to the law, further consolidates the exclusive bond between justification and faith. As in 2:16b, the verb, being a subjunctive, does not have a tense, and therefore does not tell us anything about the time of justification. Noteworthy is Paul's failure in v. 25 to affirm the present reality of justification as the result of Christ's coming, a move expected by v. 24. The

⁷⁵ The former has Betz 174 and the latter Burton 195 (justification – giving life); Bruce 180; Longenecker 144; Dunn 193-4; Fung 162-3; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 207.

⁷⁶ Equating 'righteousness' and 'life' makes Paul's statement quite inept: 'if a law had been given which is able to give righteousness, then righteousness would be by the law'. Rightly,

coming of Christ definitely marks the end of slavery, but not the beginning of justification.⁷⁷

The Hope of righteousness (5:2-5)

Justification language is missing in chapter 4,⁷⁸ but pops up again at the beginning of chapter 5. In vv. 2-4 Paul utters a series of categorical warnings about the consequence of the Galatian deviation depicted as an attempt to ‘be justified by the law’: ‘You who want to be justified (δικαιοῦσθε) by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ’ (v. 4). Though the verb is present indicative, it does not imply that righteousness by the law is a reality, or even a possibility, since for Paul there is no such thing as ‘justification by the law’, a point stated beyond any doubt.⁷⁹ Thus it can only denote the misguided *desire* on the part of the bewitched Galatians.⁸⁰ Yet the Galatians imagine that such a thing is possible, and in their mind, it refers to the justification at God’s final Judgment.⁸¹

Over against this fatal dead end, Paul now presents the real alternative in v. 5: ‘For we, through the Spirit coming from faith,⁸² are eagerly waiting for the hope of righteousness’ (ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης ἀπεκδεχόμεθα). The genitive is most probably appositional, defining righteousness itself as the object of eschatological

Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 398. *Contra* Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982) 67; Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 59; Longenecker 144; Guthrie 107; Dunn 193.

⁷⁷ Thus, the context is not evidence for a ‘liberative sense’ of justification. *Contra* Campbell, ‘Coming’ (1999) 12-13.

⁷⁸ This point does not undermine the centrality of justification since Paul uses the concept ‘inheritance’, which dominates chapter four, as a scriptural equivalent of justification. See 6.6 below.

⁷⁹ See *BDF* §167. *Contra* Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 150-151 and Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 416.

⁸⁰ That this refers to the intention of the Galatians is confirmed by 4:8 and 4:21, where Paul explicitly employs the verb θέλω.

⁸¹ So, Dunn 267-268.

⁸² For this rendering see 7.4 below.

anticipation.⁸³ Paul's use of ἀπεκδεχόμεθα, a word exclusively reserved for eschatological anticipation (Rom 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Cor 1:7; Phil 3:20; cf. Heb 9:23; 1 Pet 3:20),⁸⁴ further boosts the future eschatological thrust. In view of the rather tantalizing nature of Paul's statements on justification so far, this last reference seems crucial since here Paul identifies justification explicitly as a matter of future hope. Up to this point Paul's concern has been only with the 'how' of justification, but now, at this strategic point, he puts this question of 'how' within an unmistakably future eschatological framework by defining justification as a blessing still to be awaited.

Understandably, many interpreters object to this futuristic reading, claiming that in other parts of the letter justification is depicted as a present reality. For example, Fung, citing Schrenk, asserts that 'elsewhere in Galatians ... justification is not mentioned with reference to the future, but appears rather as something already accomplished in the present through faith in Christ. Indeed, Paul's conviction that righteousness is imparted now is "the new point in comparison with Judaism"'.⁸⁵ If this is the case, justification cannot be an object of eschatological hope and therefore 'hope of righteousness' must be a subjective genitive, referring to 'the realization of the hoped for things pertaining to the state of righteousness conferred in justification'.⁸⁶ Then the phrase refers to the hope that 'justified believers' cherish: the hope that issues from, and thus is grounded on, the present justification.⁸⁷

⁸³ Zerwick, *Greek* (1963) 17; Mußner 350 with most commentators.

⁸⁴ Glasswell, *EDNT* 1:407; Hoffmann, *NIDNTT* 2:245. Cf. Kertelge, *Rechtfertigung* (1966) 150.

⁸⁵ Fung 225. Cf. Schrenk, *TDNT* 2:205.

⁸⁶ Vos, *Eschatology* (1930) 30.

⁸⁷ So Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 142, 247: 'das mit der Rechtfertigung zugesagte Hoffnungsgut der endgültigen Erlösung'; Vos, *Eschatology* (1930) 30; Klein, 'Gottes Gerechtigkeit' (1969) 228; Bruce 41; Matera 189; Fung 224-27, 232-35; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 418-419. Zerwick, *Greek* (1963) 17 suggests the rendering 'that which δικαιοσύνη hopes for', with the abstract δικαιοσύνη standing for the concrete οἱ δίκαιοι.

Though grammatically not impossible, this reading is problematic in two respects. First, one cannot *assume* the present reality of justification in Galatians. To be sure, Paul, except for the present verse, never states explicitly that it is a future hope, but it is equally true that he never affirms its present reality either. Apart from 2:17, where future justification is strongly implied, 5:5 is the only reference to the temporal aspect of justification. It begs the question, therefore, to interpret this verse on the *a priori* assumption of realized justification.⁸⁸

Secondly, this interpretation also creates a serious problem in the flow of Paul's argument. If we take the genitive to be subjective, it means that Paul, quite surprisingly, introduces the new element of hope into his discussion. If his main emphasis is on the present reality of justification throughout, why would he, in this strategic juncture of his argument, suddenly speak of a future hope without bothering to give any further discussion? In this view justification itself may well be explained as present, but the abruptly introduced 'hope' still hangs in the air without any link to Paul's argument so far. Martyn expresses the problem aptly:

In a letter in which Paul has polemically and consistently said that the human scene-indeed the cosmos itself-has already been changed by God's rectifying deed in Christ's advent and death, it is a surprise to hear him speak with emphasis of hope, the only instance of this term in the letter. And it is a double surprise to hear him refer to rectification as a future event'.⁸⁹

This surprise is, however, an unsolicited one since, apart from the assumption of present justification, there is nothing that prevents us from taking the phrase as an

⁸⁸ In Romans 'realized' justification does not prevent Paul from speaking of end-time justification.

⁸⁹ Martyn 472. See also Cousar 115.

objective genitive: righteousness itself is the object of future hope that believers are eagerly waiting for. This then is another way of saying final salvation.⁹⁰

Thus, quite rightly, most interpreters acknowledge that the phrase refers to future justification.⁹¹ The problem is, however, that they combine this with their prior assumption of realized justification. With this uneasy conflation, some speak of double justification, one initial and the other eschatological,⁹² while others of the future 'dimension' of single justification which will come to its 'consummation' at the eschaton.⁹³ Or, according to Barrett, 'justification, then, is a beginning, and a process; and it leads to a consummation at the future judgment, when God's initial gracious verdict on the sinner is – or, it may be, is not – confirmed'.⁹⁴ And it is with this *composite* meaning that most scholars interpret Paul's argument at this point.

The problems of such interpretation are not difficult to show. First, it is exegetically ill-advised. Granted, for the sake of argument, the present reality of justification earlier in the letter, it is fallacious to transfer such meaning to this passage to produce the composite notion of justification, and interpret Paul's argument *here* with that 'richer theology of justification'.⁹⁵ This constitutes the fallacy of 'import[ing] into a particular passage a meaning discovered elsewhere, without noticing that the word in the latter passage is modified by a particular phrase or by

⁹⁰ Rightly, Mayer, *ENDT* 1:439. One may call it appositional but in this case the distinction is merely terminological.

⁹¹ E.g., Schlier 234; Mußner 350; Ladd, *Theology* (1974) 442; Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 150-152.

⁹² E.g., Duncan 156; Stuhlmacher, *Gerechtigkeit* (1965) 229; Räisänen, 'Break' (1985) 551 n. 31; Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 150 and 'Justification' (1987) 653-70; Witherington 183-184, 369. See the criticism of Stuhlmacher by Donfried, 'Justification' (1976) 95.

⁹³ E.g., Martyn 254; Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 42-3. Cf. Käsemann, *Questions* (1969) 170.

⁹⁴ *Freedom* (1985) 64-65. For Jeremias, *Message* (1965) 65, justification as 'antedonation of God's final gift' is 'the beginning of a movement towards a goal, namely towards the hour of the definitive justification, of the acquittal on the day of judgment, when the full gift is realized'. See also Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation* (1986) 72; Reuman, *Righteousness* (1982) 58; Dunn 269-70, 272; Witherington 193; Williams 138.

⁹⁵ Dunn, *Law* (1990) 208.

some syntactical feature'.⁹⁶ Indeed, as already noted, the fact that Paul defines righteousness as an object of eager anticipation (ἀπεκδέχεσθαι) makes it clear that Paul has no intention at all of allowing its present reality.

Secondly, justification as a continuous 'movement' or 'process' is an idea very difficult to swallow. Despite its popularity in recent scholarly discussion, Paul's own language lacks such convenient motifs as 'fullness' or 'consummation', even in Romans.⁹⁷ Justification may be present (Rom 5:1) or future (Rom 2:1-16; Gal 5:5), but in each case Paul's logic requires a homogeneous concept, either present or future; positing 'justification-as-a-process' seem to obscure Paul's meaning at each point.⁹⁸

Thirdly, even such a step does not help, as far as the future phase of justification remains. Granted, once again, the presence of justification, one has to admit that such initial justification remains tentative since it is also true that 'God's gift can be lost' and 'God's initial gracious verdict' may not be 'confirmed'.⁹⁹ What matters at this point is the appropriate 'life/obedience in the Spirit' on the basis of which God will bestow his final verdict of justification.¹⁰⁰ Then, one is bound to ask, what is the point of affirming the 'already' of 'initial' justification, if it can be revoked later according to one's own performance? Is Paul wasting so much papyrus just to argue for this tentative justification by faith only to contradict it later by introducing future justification which requires not only 'conviction' but also 'behaviour'? Does not this

⁹⁶ Silva, *Words* (1983) 26, referring to Barr, *Semantics* (1961) 218 who calls this 'illegitimate totality transfer'. See also Carson, *Fallacy* (1984) 62.

⁹⁷ Instructively, in Rom 5:9-10 the end result of present justification is not its 'consummation' but 'salvation'.

⁹⁸ This is not to deny eschatological 'tension' of any kind, though the word 'tension' seems somewhat unfortunate. Our point here is that such tension should not be sought within the single concept of justification. In the Galatian context we can speak of the eschatological 'movement' between present sonship and future justification, but not within justification and sonship themselves.

⁹⁹ Barrett, *Freedom* (1985) 64-65; Williams 138; Witherington 369.

¹⁰⁰ Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation* (1986) 84.

hope of righteousness then demolish the very point Paul has been making throughout the letter?¹⁰¹

As an explanation of Paul's *polemical* argument, the synthetic understanding of the 'hope of righteousness' simply does not work. Since we cannot excise the clear motif of hope in this passage, the only viable option is to take justification to be future eschatological pure and simple: 'for we, through the Spirit coming from faith, *are eagerly waiting* for the hope of righteousness'.¹⁰²

Thus far we have examined Paul's use of justification language and demonstrated that in Galatians justification refers to a future eschatological gift that God will bestow at the Judgment. We have argued that the common view of realized justification is an unfounded assumption read into Galatians, most probably under the influence of Romans. We have also seen that in a couple of places (2:17; 5:2), Paul implies the future eschatological nature of justification very strongly. We have noted in particular the importance of Paul's reference to the 'hope of righteousness' in 5:2-5, which presents 'righteousness' explicitly as an object of future hope. In sum, there is nothing in Galatians that suggests justification clearly to be a present reality, while there is clear evidence for its future eschatological nature.

¹⁰¹ Surprisingly, this logical contradiction largely escapes scholarly attention. Vos, *Pneumatologie* (1973) 105 thinks that Paul is here 'correcting the enthusiastic view of chapters 3-4' but does not explain how such self-correction works as a polemical response to the crisis.

¹⁰² Betz 262 is a lonely figure who holds on to future eschatological justification. According to him, ἐλπίς δικαιοσύνης spells out the eschatological character of the Christian salvation – 'justification by faith' is a matter of 'hope' in God. This being so, it is 'not visible and not obtainable now'. See 1.2 above (Betz). Lyons, *Autobiography* (1985) 172 also makes a passing remark about 'the futurity of justification' for which he lists 2:16, 17; 3:8, 24 and especially 5:4.

4. Broader exegetical considerations

Our case is not, however, dependent on these considerations alone. The manner in which Paul develops his arguments in general corroborates this conclusion. Since justification is the primary issue in Paul's mind, it is natural that it is closely related to other major themes of his argument: life in faith (2:15-21); the Spirit (3:1-5; cf. 2:15-21; 3:6ff.); sonship/the seed (3:6-7; 3:23-29), blessing (3:11 in 3:8-14), promise/inheritance (3:15-25) and freedom (5:1-5). In fact, it is this intricately interlocking character of Paul's argument that makes it so difficult to follow his logic precisely, which also seems to lead most interpreters to equate justification with these related yet distinct concepts.¹⁰³

In the previous section, while arguing for the future eschatological nature of justification, we made the observation that in Galatians Paul never makes an explicit affirmation of the realized nature of justification. This reservation stands out quite remarkably, especially when we compare it with the unabashed affirmation of the present privileges believers have in Christ. Throughout the letter, Paul's affirmation of the believers' present status leaves no room for ambiguity. Paul himself now lives in Christ/faith (2:19-20). The Galatians, having already received the Spirit (3:2-5; 4:6; 4:29; 5:5), are now sons and heirs (3:7; 3:29; 4:7). They have been baptized into and thus are now clothed with Christ (2:27). Their freedom from the law is also an undeniable reality for the Galatian believers (3:25; 4:31; 5:1, 13). Surprisingly, however, Paul, while making such unreserved statements about the present status of the Galatians, never, *not even once*, speaks of justification as part of their present status, even though he keeps connecting it with these present indicatives. Under the assumption of realized justification, this glaring failure to affirm this point in the

¹⁰³ This is the consensus view. See especially Williams, 'Justification' (1987).

argument which is particularly designed to prove it remains simply inexplicable. This dual observation about the eloquence of Paul in affirming the present status of the Galatian believers and the lack of comparable statements on justification almost compels us to conclude that in Galatians ‘justification’ does not belong to the present indicative of Christian life.

This conclusion becomes even stronger if we compare Paul’s discussion in Galatians with what he does in Romans. There too, Paul’s main concern is the ‘how’ of justification, proving that it is only by faith and not by works of the law. Naturally he makes a number of gnomic statements as he does in Galatians, mostly utilizing the noun δικαιοσύνη but also with verbal forms too (e.g., 3:24, 28; 4:5). Illuminatingly, *it is in Romans, where a polemical exigency is far less visible than in Galatians,*¹⁰⁴ *that the present reality of justification is declared with impressive clarity.*

Most remarkable is his liberal use of ‘time indicators’ in conjunction with aorist or perfect *indicatives*, both of which are completely lacking in Galatians. In Rom 3:21 Paul declares: ‘but now (νυνὶ δὲ) the righteousness of God has been made manifested (πεφανερώται) apart from the law’. Coupled with the perfect πεφανερώται, the emphatic νυνὶ makes the deliberate stress on the ‘now’ of justification unmistakable.¹⁰⁵ The same goes for 3:26, where Paul speaks of God’s self-demonstration as the One who is just and justifies those who believe Christ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ. Once again, in 5:9 Paul declares, ‘Now (νῦν) that we have been justified by his blood...’

¹⁰⁴ Romans is often thought to present the most ‘systematic’ exposition of justification. Whether this is true or not, it certainly seems that Paul’s discussion there, not provoked by an urgent crisis, is more balanced and less polemical than in Galatians. This consideration provides an important backdrop against which to assess Paul’s argument in Galatians. Cf. Donfried, *Romans Debate* (1991).

¹⁰⁵ Rightly, Stählin, *TDNT* 4:1117; Nygren, *Romans* (1949) 144; Bornkamm, *Experience* (1969) 63-64. Käsemann, *Romans* (1980) 92: ‘the eschatological turn’.

Even without explicit time indicators, this point stands out quite clearly. In 9:30 Paul affirms that ‘Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained righteousness (κατέλαβεν δικαιοσύνην), that is, righteousness through faith’. Statements to the same effect are made over and over again throughout the letter (cf. 5:1-2, 9-10; 8:30, 231-34; 14:17). The Paul of Romans leaves us no shred of doubt about the present reality of justification.¹⁰⁶ In Galatians, however, we do not have anything comparable. And one is bound to ask why.

Since in Romans justification concurs with ‘getting in’, it naturally forms the ground for what subsequently comes both in the present and in the future. For example, the present justification provides the ground for peace with God (present) and hope for the glory of God (future): ‘Therefore, since we have been justified (δικαιωθέντες) by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained (ἐσχήκαμεν) access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God’ (5:1-2).¹⁰⁷ Thus, it is not surprising at all that justification joins peace and joy as denominators of the Kingdom of God: ‘for the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’ (14:17). The idea of present justification as the ground for future hope receives further stress in 5:9, where it comes in as evidence for the surety of future ‘salvation’: ‘Since, therefore, we have now been justified (δικαιωθέντες νῦν) by his blood, much more shall we be saved (σωθησόμεθα) by him from the wrath of God’.¹⁰⁸ In Romans eight too, God’s present act of justification is presented as irrefutable

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Tachau, *Einst* (1972) 81-82. Cranfield, *Romans* (1975) 266. Its combination with ‘reconciliation’ and separation from final Judgment in an *a minori ad maius* argument makes the present reality of justification more emphatic. Cf. Käsemann, *Romans* (1980) 138.

¹⁰⁷ This captures both the present and the future of the justified believer. Nygren, *Romans* (1949) 195.

¹⁰⁸ Instructively, this is the meaning many scholars read in Paul’s reference to the ‘hope of righteousness’ in Galatians 5:5.

evidence for the reality of God's love, and for that matter, for the surety of future salvation (8:30, 31-34). Paul says the same thing when he states that the promise that Abraham would be the heir of the world comes 'through the righteousness of faith' (4:13). Indeed, present justification constitutes the ground for future promise.

This is, however, as we have noted, a phenomenon we *fail* to find in Galatians. While justification is closely related to other present indicatives, it is *never* posited as their ground as in Romans. All present gifts are unmistakably affirmed as already present, but without being predicated on justification (3:25, 26-29; 4:5-7, 28, 31; 5:1, 13). Neither is justification the ground for the hope of eschatological salvation. In Galatians justification is never the precondition of the 'kingdom of God' or 'eternal life', that is, future salvation (cf. Rom 5:9-10; 8:30, 31-34). On the contrary, it is justification itself that takes the place of honour as the object of eschatological hope, and the goal of Paul's argument (5:5).

This comparison becomes most fruitful in Paul's discussion of the Christian life. The necessity of proper ethical behaviour receives equal emphasis in both letters, but in different ways. In Romans justification constitutes the *ground* for obedience.¹⁰⁹ Freedom means being 'justified' from sin (δεδικαίωται, 6:7),¹¹⁰ while the pre-conversion life of slavery to sin is ironically described as 'freedom in relation to righteousness' (6:20). Having been liberated (ἐλευθερωθέντες) from the tyranny of sin, however, believers now 'have become slaves to righteousness' (ἐδουλώθητε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ) (6:18); their members are now not the weapons of wickedness but of righteousness (6:14). Thus, they are now exhorted to attain holiness by presenting

¹⁰⁹ Stuhlmacher, *Romans* (1994) 88 titles 6:1-8:31 'The Righteousness of God as the Ground and Power of New Life'. The claim of Bottorff, 'Justification' (1973) 424-430 applies to Romans, but not Galatians.

¹¹⁰ For this translation see Cranfield, *Romans* (1975) 310-11 and n. 1.

their bodies ‘to righteousness’ as its slave (6:19). Since justification refers to the radical change of believers’ status in the present, they are now ‘under the reign of righteousness’,¹¹¹ and it is only natural that Paul utilizes this language of justification to explicate the nature of Christian life.

Paul does something different, however, in Galatians. Nowhere in the letter does Paul explicitly define the present life of believers in terms of justification.¹¹² Instead of the ‘justified life’ (Romans), in Galatians Paul speaks of ‘freedom’ to characterize the immediate effect of the Christ event, and therefore, the present state of believers’ existence (2:4; 3:13, 25; 4:4; 4:21-31; 5:1, 13).¹¹³ And in contrast to Romans this freedom is never related to justification (cf. Rom 6:7, 18). Naturally, it is now on this *freedom* of sonship, *freedom* in the Spirit, that Paul bases his moral exhortation: ‘It is for freedom (τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ) that Christ liberated us. Stand firm, therefore, and do not take up the yoke of slavery again’ (5:1). ‘For you were called for freedom, brothers; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh’ (5:13).¹¹⁴ The nature of Christian life as a struggle between the Spirit and flesh is the same in both letters, but in Galatians Paul does not relate it to the idea of justification as he does in Romans (8:1, 4, 10). For the Paul of Galatians, justification is always the goal toward which he drives his arguments, and never a stepping stone for other more advanced points.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Stuhlmacher, *Romans* (1994) 89.

¹¹² The notion of ‘justified life’ is in vogue but without Paul himself making the connection it certainly begs the question.

¹¹³ As Hübner, *Law* (1984) 135-36 notes, in Romans ‘freedom’ is a neutral concept, while in Galatians it ‘provides the key for interpreting what it is to be Christian’.

¹¹⁴ Hübner, *Law* (1984) 136, who also notes that the concept of ‘righteousness of God’ used in Romans as ‘the powerful epiphany of the just and justifying God’ is missing in Galatians. This coheres with our view that in Galatians justification does not function as the ground for life. Cf. Lategan, ‘Developing’ (1990) 322. Thus, Paul’s ethic in Galatians is rightly called ‘ethic of freedom’ as does Hanson, ‘Conversion’ (1997) 213-237.

¹¹⁵ *Contra* Gundry-Volf, *Perseverance* (1990) 206, who reverses Paul’s logic by asserting that Paul uses justification ‘to answer the question how a Christian ought to live’.

There is nothing unusual about this once we grasp that in Galatians justification remains a future hope which will only come at the end of the story.

5. Contextual considerations

As most scholars would agree, Galatians is the first extant discussion of justification by Paul. And here he is engaged in a bitter polemic, a fact that leads many scholars to speak of it as a 'Kampfeslehre'.¹¹⁶ This does not mean, however, that here Paul himself invents the doctrine to defend his own position. Reading through Paul's argument, one certainly gets the impression that justification is a concept familiar to all those concerned, including the Galatians and the agitators behind them. For the Galatians this justification is available 'in the law' (5:4; cf. 4:21), and this strongly suggests that they have a future eschatological justification in mind. The fact that Paul appeals to the Old Testament to ground his claim (3:6-14) also points in the same direction.¹¹⁷

It is at this point that Paul's 'realized eschatological' *redefinition* of justification becomes unlikely. The reason is obvious: Paul's conspicuous silence on its present reality. It is clear that he is redefining its means¹¹⁸; it is not so clear, however, that he does the same about its time. The question of 'when' is never a proper topic of its own; we have nothing in the text that might divulge such an intention. Many would think that his christological redefinition necessarily *implies* such a realized eschatological twist too; this claim, however, begs too large a question since it is by no means a necessary corollary of being 'in Christ' and 'by faith'.

¹¹⁶ Wrede, *Paul* (1907) 123. Cf. Strecker, 'Befreiung' (1975) 479-508.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Goulder, 'Pauline Epistles' (1987) 490: 'The countermissionaries taught that if you kept God's Law you would be held innocent ("justified") before his judgment seat, and Paul is disputing this'. As Becker, *Paulus* (1998) 297 suggests, Paul the Pharisee probably held this view.

¹¹⁸ So Räisänen, 'Break' (1985) 146.

We have to ask seriously. Listening to Paul's sharply focused argument concerning 'justification by faith' *without the benefit of Romans*, would anyone in Galatia, who subscribes to the traditional view of future justification, have come to think that Paul claims the present realization of justification, even despite his continuing endorsement of future eschatological justification (5:5)? Given the concept of justification as God's *end-time* vindication as 'common ground', are we really compelled to conclude that here he polemically redefines it as an already present reality? If, as most interpreters maintain, Paul's burden in this letter involves affirming the present reality of justification, should we not expect him to be crystal clear about this point, as he is in his later Romans? Given the dire situation in which Paul finds himself in Galatia, would not his case have been much more forceful, if he had explicitly affirmed its present reality? Read in the context of the Galatian crisis, the only possible conclusion is that 'Paul does not dispute the common goal shared by his readers, himself and the other missionaries in Galatia, as by the people of Israel generally – "the hope of righteousness"'.¹¹⁹ If so, the idea of realized justification is misleading from the first.

Paul's alleged view of realized justification misses the point in another important sense. The Galatians have already begun in the Spirit but they clearly want *more*. Paul labels this as their desire to be 'justified in the law'. Then, as far as the Galatians are concerned, the issue is not with what lies behind or what they already enjoy but something that still lies ahead of them. Under the circumstances, Paul's talk of 'present justification' would then be seen as a mere definitional game which fails to address their real concern, i.e., the 'more' that they seek after. They would have responded: 'Oh, you call *that* justification, but that is not what we are up to. What we

¹¹⁹ Dunn 269. Yet he still thinks that Paul does dispute this by claiming its present reality.

mean is justification in the future and that is why we are adopting the law'. One may argue that Paul is trying to convince the Galatians who are still wishing to be justified that they have already been justified, albeit unwittingly, and therefore do not need to seek any further. As we have already seen, however, this is precisely the point we fail to find in Paul's discussion of the subject. All our considerations thus far therefore point to the same conclusion: Paul does not say that the Galatians are already justified since he cannot. *For the Paul of Galatians justification is not a present reality yet; it still remains a hope for which the Galatians are to wait.*¹²⁰ In Galatians then justification converges with the idea of future 'Kingdom of God' (5:21) and 'eternal life' (6:7-9), namely, future eschatological salvation.

Conclusion

A crucial conclusion has been drawn. What then is the significance of this finding for interpreting Paul's arguments in the letter as a whole? As Ziesler asserts, since Paul's main emphasis in his discussion of justification lies in the 'how' and not the 'when', is the temporal aspect simply 'irrelevant' in understanding Paul's arguments?¹²¹

Ziesler is certainly right to say that Paul's immediate purpose is not the time of justification, but he is wide of the mark when he asserts that it is irrelevant, which is in fact another way of endorsing his prior assumption of 'realized justification'.

Inasmuch as justification constitutes the centre of Paul's argument, our conclusion means that Paul's sustained polemic of 'not by law but by faith' is his answer to the overriding question, 'how to attain to future justification', which is another way of saying, 'how to attain final salvation'. That is, Paul responds to the problem in the

¹²⁰ The claim of Sanders, *Palestinian* (1977) 495 that Paul 'does not use the righteousness terminology with *any one* meaning' is not completely wrong.

¹²¹ Ziesler, *Righteousness* (1972) 180.

Galatian churches from the perspective of final salvation; he evaluates and deals with the present crisis *as it pertains to their quest for the 'hope of righteousness'*.

This conclusion requires us to reread Paul's argument in a radically different way. To substantiate this conclusion, however, there are further questions to be answered: how can we make sense of this in the context of Paul's argument as a whole?¹²² Does this conclusion cohere with the rest of his argument? More specifically, does not this conclusion fly in the face of Paul's unmistakable emphasis on 'sonship', an obviously realized gift? Further, how does it related to such motifs as 'promise' and 'inheritance' which take up the central place in Paul's scriptural argument? In the following three chapters we shall take up each of these key themes to argue that they all play their roles to corroborate Paul's central contention of *future* justification by faith and not by the law.

¹²² As we noted in the Introduction, this is what Betz fails to do, thereby rendering his view of future eschatological justification unconvincing.

CHAPTER FOUR

SON, SEED AND HEIR: PAUL'S SONSHIP LANGUAGE

For the majority of interpreters the conclusion of the previous chapter raises an immediate question: if justification, the central theme of Paul's argument, is indeed future eschatological, how are we to explain Paul's equally emphatic affirmation of the Galatians' sonship as a *present* reality? Thus, before we move further, it seems necessary to clarify the function of Paul's 'sonship' language with a view to consolidating our overall thesis that Paul argues from a fundamentally futuristic point of view.

1. The Problem of sonship in Galatia?

The prominence of 'sonship' language in Galatians is unmistakable. At various points in his argument Paul introduces several concepts which can be subsumed under the broad category of sonship. In 3:6-7 Paul infers the sonship of 'those of faith' from the fact of Abraham's justification. His introduction of the theme is abrupt and carries a note of confidence: 'Thus, take it (γινώσκετε ὅρα) that those of faith, these are (εἶσιν) sons of Abraham' (3:6-7). Taken on its own, it delivers a clear impression that sonship is indeed a very important issue for Paul's case, an impression which seems to be confirmed by the 'leap' from (Abraham's) justification to (believers') sonship.

No less explicit is the discussion of the Galatian believers' sonship in 3:26-29. As he brings his scriptural argument to its conclusion, Paul solemnly affirms: 'for all of you are (ἐστε) sons of God through faith in Christ' (3:26). The vivid sense of reality issuing from this 'enthusiastic' affirmation receives further accent from the motif of baptism into Christ, which, in turn, develops into the ideas of being clothed with

Christ and absolute oneness in Christ Jesus (3:28). Then follows the final conclusion: 'If you belong to Christ, you are (ἐστε) then Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise' (3:29).

The motif of sonship keeps occurring in chapter 4 too. 4:1-7 is, as a whole, based on the motif of son-heir; its conclusion naturally highlights the idea: 'so that he might redeem those who were under the law, and so that we might receive adoption as sons (υἱοθεσία)' (4:5). After a reference to the sonship-testifying Spirit (4:6) Paul concludes: 'so that you are no longer (οὐκέτι) a slave but a son; if a son, then an heir through God' (4:7). Combined with the statement in 3:29, Paul's intention to establish the Gentile believers' sonship is undeniable. In 4:21-31 too, the subject is Abraham's two sons: the son of flesh on the one hand, and the son of promise/Spirit on the other. Here too, Paul's affirmation is clear-cut and confident: 'Now, brothers, you are children of promise, as Isaac was' (4:28). The conclusion of the argument reiterates the same point: 'Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman but of the free woman' (4:31). As is clear from this brief survey, Paul's is very emphatic in affirming the sonship of the Galatians: 'You are *no longer* a slave but a son!'¹

Not surprisingly, most scholars detect in Paul's emphatic sonship language a strong note of polemic aimed at the agitators' low view of the Gentile believers' present status. They are stirring up the Galatians with alarming success claiming that the privilege of sonship, i.e., membership in God's covenant, depends on their receiving circumcision. That is, unless they get themselves circumcised, they will be excluded from this blessed company of children of Abraham (4:17). Having been persuaded by this claim 'solidly' based on the Scriptures, the Galatians are now on the

¹ In the previous chapter we contrasted this to Paul's reservation about justification.

verge of taking up this demand, desiring to secure their identity as members of God's covenant people.

If this is in fact what is transpiring in Galatia, it is not difficult to understand the emphatic tone in which Paul affirms the sonship of the Galatians. Appalled by the disastrous move in the Galatian churches, Paul has no alternative but to take up the issue.² So he devotes central sections of the letter to demonstrating that sonship depends only on faith and in no way on circumcision (3:6-7; 3:26-29; 4:1-7; 4:21-31). In sum, it is argued, sonship is the primary issue at stake in Galatia, and this explains the prevalence of the theme in Paul's argument.³

Taken in this way, Paul's affirmation of the Galatian believers' sonship carries a strong polemic. To the Galatian believers, so distressed as even to consider circumcision to rectify their sorry situation, Paul's unequivocal affirmation of their *present* sonship must have elicited a deep sigh of relief: 'We *have* already crossed the boundary; we *are* now sons of Abraham/God!' If so, Paul's affirmation of the Galatian believers' sonship, flying in the face of the agitators denying such privilege to the uncircumcised Gentiles, necessarily carries a strong note of realised eschatology. In view of the fact that the Galatians are already 'those of faith', Paul's affirmation of faith as the only condition of sonship simply confirms that they have already become sons of Abraham/God, that is, apart from circumcision. Paul has turned the agitators' conditional 'not-yet' into an unequivocal 'already'.

² So Barrett, 'Allegory' (1975) 1-16 (here 15).

³ This is the consensus. According to Hübner, *Law* (1984) 15-16, Paul's argument on sonship is a 'higher order argument' in whose framework the theme of justification is placed. For the Galatians, the main concern was sonship since, persuaded by the agitators, 'they were concerned to ensure that their status was indeed that of sons of Abraham'. For Paul, too, 'everything depends on what it is that *constitutes* being a son of Abraham' (emphasis original). See, e.g., Burton 155; Wilckens, *Rechtfertigung* (1974) 132; Foerster, 'Abfassungszeit' (1964) 139; Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 75-6; Drane, *Paul* (1975) 24; Beker, *Paul* (1980) 48; Lincoln, *Paradise* (1981) 9-11; Silva, 'Eschatological' (1994) 151;

Self-evident as this reconstruction may sound to many, however, there are reasons to be cautious. For one thing, 'sonship' is an ambiguous concept, an umbrella term which embraces several distinct motifs: 'sons of Abraham' (3:6-7), 'seed of Abraham' (3:29), 'sons of God' (3:26; 4:5-7) and 'children of promise/Spirit' (3:21-31). The idea of sonship can certainly serve as a common denominator of these related concepts; it should not, however, be assumed *a priori* that Paul always wants to score the same point with these terms. Frequently, in an argument a different phrase signals a different purpose. Hence being sons of God is not necessarily the same thing as being sons of Abraham or seed of Abraham; we have to allow the possibility that they all have their own distinctive functions. A close investigation of the data is therefore in order before we make any general claims about the theme.

2. *Justification and sons of Abraham (3:6-9)*

The first discussion of sonship occurs in 3:6-9, initiating Paul's scriptural argument which continues until the end of chapter four. After a programmatic statement on justification (2:15-21) and a castigating reminder of the reality of the crucifixion (3:1) and the powerful working of the Spirit (3:2-5), Paul resumes his talk of justification, now appealing to the Scripture. He begins with the case of Abraham, which is a very perceptive, possibly inevitable, choice under the present circumstances.⁴ The passage

Hanson, *Abraham* (1989) 113; Hong, *Law* (1993) 110, 116; Dunn, *Theology* (1994) 39; Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 129.

⁴ It is possible that Paul is responding to the agitators' use of the Old Testament, as Barrett, 'Allegory' (1975) and Longenecker 114 think. As Schlier 86 and Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 94-95 remind us, however, this does not necessarily mean that each of his scriptural arguments should be 'dialogical', a sort of point-by-point refutation. There is no methodological justification for positing a coherent theology of the opponents and then explaining Paul's argument as a case-by-case refutation of the 'building blocks' of their teaching.

he seizes upon is Genesis 15:6, a text he deploys once again later in Romans: ‘Just as⁵ Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness’ (3:6). Then follows Paul’s own inference: ‘Therefore, take it⁶ that those of faith, these are the sons of Abraham’ (3:7). At first sight, this move sounds like an utter *non sequitur*, since we are not told how the sonship of the Gentile believers can be deduced from Abraham’s justification. A more natural inference would be: ‘Therefore, take it that for those of faith, their faith is reckoned as righteousness.’ Yet, significantly, Paul avoids this expected conclusion, and instead, claims the sonship of the believing Gentiles. How can we explain this obvious ‘leap’?⁷

Many interpreters ‘explain’ this seemingly awkward move by pointing to the situation in Galatia. Martyn formulates this position very clearly:

Taken somewhat “in its own right,” the text of Gen 15:6 says nothing about Abraham’s descendants. It is because of the work of the Teachers that Paul (a) places his exegetical emphasis on an expression not found in the text, “the descendants of Abraham,” and (b) answers a question not posed in that text: “Who is it who can truly be said to be the children of Abraham?”⁸

However, a mere reference to the situation does not in itself provide an explanation of Paul’s logic, since one is bound to ask: if sonship is the main issue from the first, why does he appeal to Genesis 15:6 in the first place, a passage which says nothing about Abraham’s descendants? He could have appealed to other passages, for example, in

⁵ Καθώς is probably not a quotation formula. So Longenecker 112; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 97, 101-102 (‘exemplum im Sinn von Urbild und Typos’). *Contra* Betz 140; Hays, *Faith* (1983) 199; Hanson, *Abraham* (1989) 112.

⁶ The verb is imperative rather than indicative, which seems to fit better with the argumentative mode. So Bruce 155; Fung 138. Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 103; Longenecker 114; Martyn 299 take it as ‘an epistolary disclosure formula’.

⁷ This ‘leap’ is often noted. E.g., Schlier 129: ‘etwas kühne Behauptung’; Berger, ‘Abraham’ (1966) 50: ‘unbewiesene Behauptung’; Martyn, *Issues* (1998) 162: ‘a strange exegesis’.

⁸ 299-300. See also Beker, *Paul* (1980) 48; Hanson, *Abraham* (1989) 112-3; Foerster, ‘Thema’ (1937) 292; Hübner, *Law* (1984) 15-16; Witherington 227; B. Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 129.

Hosea (1:10; 2:23) or done something similar to what he does in Romans 9:7-13. A glance at the 'hard-pressed Paul' may make one sympathetic, but it will not make his spurious logic any more convincing. On the contrary, it only shows what shaky ground he stands on when it comes to his scriptural basis.

Noting this problem, others suggest that we should take v. 7 as an anticipatory conclusion to be consolidated in the following argument.⁹ This suggestion is hardly satisfactory, either. If that is in fact the case, then we would expect Paul to restate this intended conclusion at least once more at the end of the argument. As a matter of fact, however, Paul does not speak of sonship any more until 3:26. It is very doubtful that the Galatians, after hearing what Paul says in vv. 6-14, should have thought this to be the consolidation of Paul's pre-stated thesis on 'sonship' in v. 7. The καθὼς-ἄρα construction seems to demand an immediate inference from the quoted *exemplum* itself.

If we take sonship as the major point of Paul's argument in vv. 6-9, the flow of Paul's thought becomes very difficult, if not impossible, to follow. Not only is his move from Abraham's justification to Gentile believers' sonship problematic,¹⁰ but his abrupt and isolated reference to sonship (v. 7) in the middle of the sustained talk of justification (vv. 6, 8, 11) also remains puzzling.¹¹ An inevitable question arises: is sonship really the main point for which Paul argues?

The overall flow of vv. 6-14 shows that its context is justification (vv. 6, 8, 11), and therefore, we have to interpret it accordingly. Undue preoccupation with sonship

⁹ E.g., Hartman, 'Gal 3.15-4.11' (1993) 135: '...the thesis of v. 7 does not form a link' in the chain of logic in 3:6-9; 'it takes 3:8-29 to argue it'. See also Betz 141; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 102; Dunn 162-3, 183, 208.

¹⁰ Equating justification with sonship, of course, begs the question.

¹¹ Stanley, 'Curse' (1990) 493 rightly notes the absence of sonship motif in vv. 8-9. Yet, his neglect of justification is surprising.

may actually hamper the flow of Paul's thought, since Paul's interest in it seems secondary. Paul's argument in vv. 6-7 runs as follows:

καθὼς Ἀβραὰμ ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην:
Γινώσκετε ἄρα ὅτι οἱ ἐκ πίστεως, οὗτοι υἱοὶ εἰσιν... Ἀβραάμ.

As the underlined parts show, the main point of comparison between 'just as' and 'therefore' is faith: just as Abraham 'believed God' and was considered righteous, 'those of faith'¹² are sons of Abraham. As the insertion of the emphatic οὗτοι indicates, here Paul singles out 'those of faith' and relates them to Abraham. Since the Gentile believers too exercise the same faith, they are sons of *this* Abraham, i.e., *the Abraham who believed and was thereby justified*. The implication of this affirmation is: their faith, just as the faith of Abraham, forms the singular ground for their justification. That is, in v. 7 Paul is not making a typical definition of sonship. What he does here is to modify its boundary in terms of faith: 'those of faith, *only these*'¹³ are sons of Abraham'. That is, only 'those of faith' will participate in the blessing of justification just as Abraham did.¹⁴

¹² The context makes it clear that 'those of faith' means 'those who believe'. Rightly, Betz 142; Dunn 162. *Contra*, Hays, *Faith* (1983) 200-202; *idem*, *Echoes* (1989) 108 who take v. 7 as the 'Vorklang' of Hab 2:4 which he interprets christologically. Martyn 299 claims both meanings.

¹³ Being emphatic, it carries the meaning: 'gerade diese – und keine anderen'. Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 105. See also Schlier, 128; Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 148. The attempt of Dunn 166 to allow the Israel before Christ into 'those of faith' is tendentious. In Galatians, faith only comes with Christ (3:23, 25). When he speaks of 'those of faith', Paul has the Galatians in mind.

¹⁴ Marius Victorinus. (Edwards 39); Bligh, *Greek* (1966) 131; Lambrecht, 'Abraham' (1999) 526; Hanson, *Abraham* (1988) 115; Choi, 'Spirit' (1998) 184-85.

In this context, then, the sonship motif denotes the effective bond¹⁵ between Abraham and Gentile believers on the basis of common faith, and thereby grounds Paul's logic from *καθώς* to *ἄρα*. It serves as a way of affirming the principle of justification by faith for the Gentile believers. After the scriptural norm of justification by faith established in Abraham (v. 6), Paul's reference to 'sons of Abraham' necessarily implies that the same principle also applies for Gentile believers. *Καθώς* describes Abraham's justification by faith; so does *ἄρα*. In other words, the point of v. 7 is not so much sonship as justification by faith warranted by the experience of Abraham. By establishing a filial relationship between the justified Abraham and the Gentile believers on the sole ground of faith, Paul in fact (re)claims the scriptural truth of justification by faith for the present Gentile believers. Paul is not making 'an unproved claim'¹⁶ for the sonship of the Gentile believers; there is no rupture in Paul's argument. With the help of the 'sonship' motif,¹⁷ Paul simply affirms the truth of justification by faith.¹⁸

This reading is confirmed by the following argument in vv. 8-9, which clarifies on what ground faith establishes such a filial relationship between Abraham and the *Gentile* believers.¹⁹ Paul first picks up the obvious conclusion of vv. 6-7: 'And the

¹⁵ *BAGD*, *υἱός*, l.c.γ. Mußner 219; Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 148: 'spiritual kinship or association'. The reference to the Semitic use of *נָחַ* in the sense of 'sharing in a particular quality or characteristic' is somewhat different since such usage is usually followed by an abstract noun (e.g. might, beauty, etc.) rather than a personal name. *Contra* Dunn 162-3; Bruce 155.

¹⁶ Berger. See n. 7 above.

¹⁷ This 'sonship' motif anticipates his appeal to Gen 12:3, where the Gentiles are said to be blessed 'in you'.

¹⁸ Commentators dispute whether Paul's sonship statement is polemical or not. Compare Mußner 217; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 105; Longenecker 114 (polemical) and Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 148-9 who points out that Paul's reasoning in vv. 6-7 is inadequate for a polemical response. The polemic is certainly there, but not on 'sonship'. The real clincher is 'justification by faith' secured by the filial bond with Abraham. Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 73, 85, perceptively captures the subordinate nature of 'sonship', though still failing to acknowledge the context of justification.

¹⁹ Rightly Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 118-9.

Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith...' (v. 8a).²⁰ To back up this conclusion, he appeals to another passage in the Scripture: 'All the Gentiles will be blessed in you (ἐν σοί)' (v. 8b).²¹ By quoting this oracle, Paul presses two points: 1) the Gentiles are part of God's original plan revealed to Abraham²² and 2) they will be blessed in Abraham. Hence the Scripture itself decrees that the Gentiles will share Abraham's blessing 'in you', namely, as Abraham's sons. His claim in vv. 6-7 is perfectly legitimate. The question is, however, why 'by faith'?

It is at this point that Paul's polemic kicks in: the Abraham in whom the Gentiles are to be blessed is, as Paul has already made clear, the Abraham who 'believed God' (3:6, 9). Since God pronounced blessing for the Gentiles 'in this *believing* (πιστῶ) Abraham' (3:9), it follows that the Gentiles will be υἱοί 'Αβραάμ (3:6) by sharing the same faith which brought him the gift of justification.²³ By defining Abraham in terms of faith, Paul makes sonship exclusively a matter of faith, producing a happy liaison between two 'believers': ὥστε οἱ ἐκ πίστεως εὐλογοῦνται σὺν τῷ πιστῷ 'Αβραάμ (3:9).²⁴

For Paul, then, the primary significance of Abrahamic sonship lies in the fact that the Galatian believers are, as Abraham's sons, placed 'in you', and thereby become

²⁰ Otherwise, Paul's jumping from 'justification' to 'sonship', and then back to 'justification' again becomes a bewildering anomaly.

²¹ Paul seems to be thinking mainly of Gen 12:3, while replacing πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ with πάντα τὰ ἔθνη in 18:18 or 22:18. In this way, Paul makes this pronouncement address the Gentiles, τὰ ἔθνη. Dunn 164 is incorrect to say that the variation in detail is 'inconsequential'.

²² Emphasized by Sanders, *Law* (1996) 21; Hanson, *Abraham* (1989) 115; Hays, *Echoes* (1989) 106; Witherington 228. Bruce 156.

²³ *Contra* Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 148, 156, who considers that blessing was received on the basis of prior justification both for Abraham and the believers. This view was suggested as early as in 1912 by Vos, 'Eschatological' (1912) 101 n. 15, who considers 'justification' as 'the indispensable prerequisite of receiving the εὐλογία' which converges with 'inheritance'. Then, 'justification is a means to an end' namely, to the blessing and inheritance.

²⁴ In the OT context, the condition of 'in you' is determined by the nations' disposition toward Abraham himself: by blessing Abraham, they will be blessed 'in Abraham' who is the 'source of blessing' (Gen 12:2-3). Paul turns this relationship to that of faith: those who share the same faith are blessed 'in Abraham'.

part of πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, the God-designated beneficiaries of the gospel of justification by faith. That Paul brings in Abraham with the conjunction καθώς, and also that he paraphrases ἐν with σὺν advise us not to press the motif of sonship too hard.²⁵ He is not presenting this argument to resolve the question of sonship. Rather Paul's purpose is to authenticate his gospel that God justifies the Gentiles by faith. He accomplishes this by bringing in the figure of Abraham who was himself justified by faith, and on that score, has become the recipient of God's gospel message that the Gentiles will also be blessed in himself, that is, by sharing his faith. Sonship is a supporting motif serving the argument for justification by faith; its primary function is to express the solidarity between Abraham and the Gentile believers.²⁶

Primarily, then, *Paul is not making an affirmation concerning the Galatian believers' status as Abraham's sons*. His affirmation of the Gentile believers' sonship turns out to be an exegetical device to establish the truth of justification by faith.²⁷ He is not asking his readers to join him in celebrating the 'already' of sonship. In a

²⁵ This speaks against Hays' attempt to conflate 'in you' with 'in your seed' in other Genesis texts (Gen 22:8 or 26:4) and interpret it christologically as Paul does in 3:16 and 29. *Faith* (1983) 203-6 and *Echoes* (1989) 106; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 150. Also Theodoret (Edwards, 44); Dahl, *Studies* (1977) 131, 171, 172 n. 20; Meeks, *Urban* (1983) 176-7; Martyn 301-2. According to what Paul says in 3:9, a text Hays misses out at this point, the Gentiles are not blessed 'in' but 'together with' the faithful Abraham. Rightly, Hübner, *Theologie* (1993) 73. Cf. Hanson, *Abraham* (1989) 126. Cf. *Jewish New Testament*: 'In connection with you'. On the other hand, what Paul concerns himself with in 3:16-29 is not Abraham but only 'his seed', another original recipient of the same promise: καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ. The Gentiles have the promise in Abraham's seed. But they do so not because 'in you' (3:9) means 'in your seed', but because this promise was originally made to Abraham καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ (3:16).

Paul utilizes Gen 15:6 once again in Romans 4 (4:3, 9), where Abraham's justification before circumcision is unpacked to prove the truth of justification by faith. Here the connection between Abraham and believers is supported by an opposite move: not the 'sonship' of believers but by the universal 'fatherhood' of Abraham (4:11, 12, 16-18). Just as Abraham's 'fatherhood' is a median point supporting the claim of justification by faith, so is 'sonship' in Galatians.

²⁶ We see that from 2:15 onward the theme is justification. In 3:1-5 he narrows down to the issue of the Spirit, but he does so because the Spirit is essential to prove his case of 'justification by faith' in a similar way to 3:14 where his discussion of justification by faith also leads to the talk of the Spirit.

²⁷ Cf. Ropes, *Singular* (1929) 7.

context where Paul perceives a dangerous deviation from faith (1:6ff.; 4:8-12; 5:6-7), his unequivocal affirmation of faith as the only way to justification serves as a stern warning that only those who hold on to faith will be able to participate in the future blessing of justification.

In this connection, we also observe that the idea of 'Abrahamic sonship' does not figure prominently in Paul's subsequent argument. In two places Paul speaks of 'sons of God' (3:26; 4:5, 7), but this belongs to a different category and should not be conflated with 'sons of Abraham'. At the end of chapter three, Paul sums up his argument with the idea of 'seed of Abraham' (3:29). Here too, the use of σπέρμα instead of υἱός suggests that Paul is using this notion in a context-specific way in relation to such issues as 'promise', 'inheritance' and 'seed' (3:15ff.). Though there is an obvious overlap between the two ideas, a simple identification should not be assumed.²⁸ Even in 4:21-31 where Paul speaks of Abraham's sons, the issue is not sonship *per se*, but their heirship: 'among two sons of Abraham, which is the rightful heir?' Then, 3:7 is the only place where we find the 'sons of Abraham' motif, and that in the middle of his argument for justification by faith. This observation further confirms that Abrahamic sonship is not in fact the main question with which Paul is grappling.

3. *Sons of God and seed of Abraham (3:26-29)*

The next passage in which 'sonship' figures prominently is 3:26-29, the concluding section of Paul's argument based on the Abrahamic promise (3:15-29). In this section 'the inheritance' replaces justification as the dominant subject of discussion (v. 19) with 'the promise' taking up the role of faith in the programmatic antithesis to the law.

²⁸ Dunn 163 seems to perceive the difference between the two, but temporarily. See 183, 208.

The basic question posed in vv. 15-18 is ‘How can one get the promised inheritance, by promise or law?’,²⁹ which Paul answers with a definite ‘by promise’. Vv. 19-25 follow this on, taking up the almost inevitable question about the function of the law: Τί οὖν ὁ νόμος; (v. 19). Paul’s basic position is clear: inasmuch as the law is unable to give life, it does not compete with the promise (v. 20); on the contrary, by shutting up everything under sin, it serves the way of promise (v. 22). Then Paul declares that by the coming of faith the law exhausted its designated temporary function, with the result that ‘we are no longer under the παιδαγωγός’ (vv. 23-25). V. 25 then is the conclusion of Paul’s discussion, describing the Gentile believers’ present relation *vis-à-vis* the law. This negative conclusion is paralleled to the positive statement in v. 29, forming an effective οὐκέτι ... δέ contrast: ‘You are *no longer* ... *but* if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring...’ Between these two negative and positive statements, vv. 26-28, led by γάρ, function as a *supporting* argument providing the ground for both v. 25 and v. 29: ‘since³⁰ in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith’.³¹ Paul seems to be saying: In view of the Gentile believers’ undeniable status as God’s sons, it goes without saying that they are not in slavery under the law (v. 25).³² On the contrary, since³³ they now belong to Christ, they are the offspring of Abraham (v. 29).

This observation is crucial in assessing the function of Paul’s sonship language. Structurally, Paul’s main emphasis falls on the dual conclusions in v. 25 and v. 29, while the intervening statements in vv. 26-28, in which the motif of divine sonship

²⁹ Rightly, Bruce 169-70; Braumann, *NIDNTT* 1:285-290.

³⁰ With Campbell, ‘Eschatological’ (1999) 73 one may take γάρ as general and explanatory. Even so, it differs from ἄρα or ὥστε. That is, here Paul is not making a conclusion.

³¹ *Contra* Betz 181; Harnisch, ‘Einübung’ (1987) 283.

³² With Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 222.

³³ Taking up the force of vv. 27-28, εἰ in v. 29 becomes ‘since’. So Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 224.

occurs, support and strengthen these major affirmations. Taken in its specific context, then, the sonship of the Gentile believers in v. 26 is not the main conclusion Paul intends to draw. Within the argument for the Gentile believers' freedom from the law (v. 25), and their existence as the offspring of Abraham (v. 29), sonship stands as a *subsidiary* motif helping these main points to stand out more effectively. The Πάντες with a capital Π, with which both N/A (27) and UBS begins a new paragraph in v. 26, is therefore fatal to following through Paul's logic.

Even within the context of vv. 26-28,³⁴ we perceive that sonship is not Paul's primary concern. As Paul goes on to explain, the sonship of the Gentile believers is grounded on their being 'in Christ Jesus'. Their existence in Christ, effected by their baptism into Christ, means that they are now clothed with Christ Himself: their whole existence is now determined by Christ (v. 27).³⁵ From this originally neutral statement, Paul then draws a very specific inference that serves his polemical purpose: the absolute equality of all those in Christ.

Several features are worth noting. First, the effective antitheses in v. 28a followed by an explicit statement in v. 28b makes Paul's immediate intention beyond doubt: πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. Secondly, Paul's repeated use of such inclusive pronouns as πάντες (v. 26), ὅσοι (v. 27) and πάντες (v. 28b) also adds weight to his emphasis on the singular principle of faith in Christ. Thirdly, we note the unmistakable parallelism between v. 26 and v. 28b, yet with a very interesting variation, namely, the replacement of the previous υἱοὶ θεοῦ by εἷς. If Paul

³⁴ Many detect a confessional (baptismal) formula in vv. 27-28. Schlier 174-5; Betz 181-5; Longenecker 154-6. Bruce 187 disagrees. See now Campbell, 'Eschatological' (1999) 7-20 for a compelling criticism of the de-contextualizing tendency common to the form-critical approaches.

³⁵ As Bruce 184 points out, the idea is not adequately captured by either 'mysticism' of Schweitzer, *Mysticism* (1930) 116; 270 or 'diagram' of Deissman, *Paul* (1957) 239-299 or even the Hebrew notion of 'corporate personality'. Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 221 n. 214.

argues for sonship, this replacement of 'sons of God' by 'one' would be very tactless. This change shows quite clearly that Paul's thought is very much taken up by the idea of the exclusive effectiveness of being 'in Christ'.³⁶

Fourthly, the transition from vv. 26-28 to the final conclusion in v. 29 also reveals the same tendency. Following up what he has just said, Paul concludes: 'Now if you belong to Christ (Χριστοῦ),³⁷ you are then the offspring of Abraham'. What Paul takes from his previous statements in vv. 26-28 is not the concept of sonship but the bond with Christ which has been variously expressed either 'in Christ' (vv. 26, 28), or 'baptism into Christ', or 'being clothed with Christ' (v. 27). And from this 'in Christ', and not from 'sons of God',³⁸ Paul draws his main conclusion about the Gentile believers' existence as the 'seed of Abraham'.

From these observations we can draw an important conclusion: in this argument *the 'sons of God' motif is not Paul's major concern.*³⁹ He does affirm the sonship of the Gentile believers. However, this affirmation occurs in a subsidiary argument, serving the main contention about the exclusive validity of faith in Christ: 'So long as you are in Christ, you are all sons of God, in other words, you are all one and the same without any distinction!' And this in turn supports the dual statements concerning the Gentile believers' liberation from the law (v. 25) and their status as Abraham's seed (v. 29). At least in this context, then, the centrality of sonship in Paul's argument cannot be maintained. Scholarly preoccupation with this interesting

³⁶ Campbell, 'Eschatological' (1999), rightly and very rarely, takes this change from 'sons of God' to 'one' seriously. Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 224 makes a perceptive comment that Paul uses εἰς out of his concern to emphasise 'sameness' and 'equality', while he speaks of ἐν σῶμα in 1 Cor 12:12-27 and Rom 12:5 where the motif of 'unity' is on the surface. See also Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 73. Cf. Theissen, *Reality* (1992) 181.

³⁷ This is a genitive of possession. So Zerwick, *Greek* (1963) 15-16; Moule, *Idiom* (1959) 38; Bligh, *Greek* (1966) 156. Schlier 175 goes too far when he speaks of 'Christus selbst'.

³⁸ Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 173.

³⁹ Rightly, Boers, *Justification* (1994) 68; Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 73, 85; Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 173; (cautiously) Hartman, 'Gal 3.15-4.11' (1993) 143.

statement is understandable,⁴⁰ but Paul's logic has to be sustained. All along, Paul's concern is to put the Gentile believers within the boundary of the Seed of Abraham, namely, as the recipients of God's promise (vv. 16, 19), and thereby ascertain their prospect as the appointed heirs of God's inheritance (v. 29). In this passage Paul is indeed most eloquent on the 'sonship' of the Gentile believers, but it is also true that it is not the major point Paul wants to make in the context.

If this reading is correct, the claim that the note of realised eschatology is the main thrust of Paul's argument has to be given up. To be sure, Paul does make many strong indicative statements on sonship in vv. 26-29. It is also beyond doubt that it does represent part of Paul's Christian convictions. It does not follow from this, however, that it is the major point of *this particular argument*. Since they are not the final points Paul argues for in the context, they should not be allowed to determine the thrust of Paul's argument as a whole.

4. Seed of Abraham as heirs

In v. 29, as indicated by the οὐκέτι-δέ contrast, Paul presents the positive counterpart to the negative statement in v. 25, bringing his argument to its intended conclusion: εἰ δὲ ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ, ἄρα τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ σπέρμα ἐστέ ... (v. 29). Since faith has come, we are no longer under the law (v. 25), because through this faith in Christ we have now all become equal sons of God (vv. 26-28). At the same time, since we belong to Christ, we are now the seed of Abraham, because by faith we are in the 'Seed of Abraham', who is Christ! (v. 29). And it means that we too, as the seed of Abraham, are given the same promise that Abraham *and* his Seed received. And at this point we see why Paul focuses on the notion of 'Abraham's seed' and 'being in Christ'. By

⁴⁰ Betz assigns twelve pages to v. 28 but only one to v. 29.

identifying the seed exclusively as Christ, and then making this seed inclusive of those who 'believe', Paul effectively relates God's 'promise' to the Seed (v. 16) to the Gentile believers.

Yet, even this emphasis on the 'seed of Abraham' is not the ultimate point Paul wants to hammer home. He has not finished yet; it is crucial 'to pay attention to Paul's *conclusions*'.⁴¹ Being Abraham's seed, the Gentile believers are therefore κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν⁴² κληρονόμοι. The phrase is appositional,⁴³ clarifying what Paul has in mind with 'seed of Abraham' just affirmed: 'Abraham's seed, *therefore*, heirs according to the promise'. From v. 15 onward, Paul's discussion is sustained by the antithesis of promise (ἐπαγγελία) and law, and throughout the argument Paul's concern has been the question of inheritance (κληρονομία) (v. 18). Alongside this, we also hear that this 'promise' is given only to Abraham's single 'Seed' (σπέρμα), who is Christ. And it is clear how v. 29 sums up Paul's train of thought in a fitting conclusion: by faith (διὰ τῆς πίστεως) the believers belong to Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ), and by belonging to Christ who is the only legitimate Seed (εἰ δὲ ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ), they too take on the identity of Abraham's seed (τοῦ Ἀβραάμ σπέρμα). Since God's promise was addressed only to Abraham and his Seed (v. 16), it follows that the Gentile believers too, as the plural seed within this singular Seed, have now become the recipients of the same promise of inheritance: they are κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι.

It is clear by now that even when he speaks of Christ as the singular seed of Abraham (v. 16), he already has in mind the Gentile believers who have become the

⁴¹ Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 51.

⁴² In context κατά followed by the accusative 'promise' seems to mean 'with respect to' rather than 'according to'. Cf. *BAGD*, 407. The believers become heirs not as the fulfilment of promise; they are heirs to what is promised. *Contra* Betz 201.

⁴³ Bligh, *Greek* (1966) 156.

‘seed of Abraham’ by believing in Christ.⁴⁴ It is also clear that for Paul the significance of the status as Abraham’s seed lies precisely in the fact that God promised the inheritance to Abraham ‘and to his seed’; only the seed is the legitimate heir to God’s promised inheritance (vv. 16, 19, 22).

Thus the term σπέρμα bears a strategic importance in Paul’s argument since it is by utilising this motif that Paul answers the fundamental question ‘How does one get the promised inheritance?’ with a confident ‘by faith’. By faith one is placed in Christ; in Christ, the singular ‘Seed’, one also becomes Abraham’s seed; as the promise-receiving seed, one now becomes the heir to God’s inheritance; it is, then, by faith that one attains the promised inheritance. In this chain of reasoning, the motif of ‘seed’ constitutes a crucial and yet subsidiary link sustaining the chief point of ‘heirship’ of those who belong to Christ.⁴⁵

Thus, we observe that the idea of the ‘seed of Abraham’ in v. 29 is given a very different role from that of ‘sons of Abraham’ in 3:7.⁴⁶ While the latter is used to denote the Gentile believers’ solidarity with *Abraham* and his justification by faith, the former carries a primarily christological function to secure the bond between the believers and *Christ*. Coming in to settle the question about inheritance, the ‘seed of Abraham’ points to Christ; Abraham is outside Paul’s purview at this point since the Seed himself is a recipient of God’s promise in his own right (‘*and to his seed*’). Abraham is crucial in testifying to the priority of God’s promise (3:15, 18); unlike in 3:6-7, however, the filial bond with his person is not relevant in this context. In Paul’s

⁴⁴ Dunn 185.

⁴⁵ Moor-Crispin, ‘Galatians 4:1-9’ (1989) 217; Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 52, 69 and 85.

⁴⁶ *Contra* the generalizing interpretation of Burton 210 and most others.

own argument, ‘sons of Abraham’ and ‘seed of Abraham’ play distinct roles, and therefore, should not be conflated with each other.⁴⁷

The same caveat applies to ‘sons of God’ in v. 26. Throughout the argument the crucial question is who the seed of Abraham is. What is at stake here is God’s promise of inheritance given to the seed of *Abraham*. To this question, Paul’s answer is those who believe in Christ are considered the seed by virtue of being in the Seed to whom the promise has been made. Thus, if this particular notion of Abrahamic seed is replaced by the motif of ‘son of God’, Paul’s argument would not make any sense at all. Similar though they may look, their distinct functions in context demand that each should be taken on its own terms.

5. *Sons as heirs (4:1-7)*

Our next passage (4:1-7) confirms that Paul’s emphasis on heirship is in fact not accidental. The overall flow of logic is basically the same as that in 3:25-29: the Christ event (3:25a/ 4:4-5) - liberation (οὐκέτι, 3:25b/4:7a) - status as ‘seed of Abraham’/‘sons’ (3:29a/4:7a) - heirship (3:29b/4:7b). However, this sub-section divulges some further interesting points. First, the issue is still heirship, but remarkably, the figure of Abraham does not come into the picture at all. Whether Paul’s illustration is Jewish or Greco-Roman,⁴⁸ the Abrahamic tradition is not in his purview here. That Paul can speak of sonship and heirship without invoking the figure of Abraham seems not insignificant.⁴⁹ Secondly, unlike in 3:26-29, now Paul does speak of ‘son of God’ as part of his main point, replacing the motif of ‘seed of

⁴⁷ This mistake forces Beker to speak of ‘the peculiar shift’ and ‘inconsistency’ in Paul’s argument. This decision is partly caused by his failure to note the distinctness of these motifs. *Paul* (1980) 23-58. Hong, *Law* (1993) 45-49 shares the same problem.

⁴⁸ See 6.2 below.

⁴⁹ Paul dispenses with Abraham in a passage in which he makes his emphasis on sonship most explicit. Is Paul really tackling the problem of *Abrahamic* sonship?

Abraham' in 3:29. This is due to the change of background in the discussion.⁵⁰ Paul's appeal here is not to the scriptural logic of the Abrahamic 'seed-heir' but to the legal one of a 'son-heir' drawn from the everyday life of the Galatian believers.

In any case, Paul's emphasis on sonship is quite explicit: 'in order that we might receive adoption as sons (υἱοθεσία)' (4:5). On adoption, the Spirit is bestowed as the confirmation of this newly established sonship (6), and then the final conclusion follows: 'Therefore (ὥστε), you are no longer a slave but a son!' In this passage too, however, 'sonship' is not the ultimate point that Paul intends to make. If it were, Paul, having reached his goal, could well have stopped at this point. After affirming the sonship of the Gentile believers, Paul goes on to add: εἰ δὲ υἱός, καὶ κληρονόμος διὰ θεοῦ (4:7b). Here we observe exactly the same emphasis on heirship: if you are a son, then, you are also an heir!⁵¹

Now the move from sonship to heirship has become much more explicit. While in 3:29 the motif of heirship is expressed by an apposition added to the statement on sonship, here in 4:7 the thought is expressed in a separate sentence specifically designed to bring out this very point. This makes it quite indisputable that Paul's move from sonship to heirship carries a definite argumentative purpose. This is also confirmed by the fact that the argument itself is introduced as one concerning the state of ὁ κληρονόμος (4:1). Even when Paul unequivocally affirms the sonship of the Gentile believers, he does so not because the Galatian believers' sonship is crucial on its own terms, but because it is necessary for establishing their *heirship* to God's inheritance. Hence Paul is at pains to affirm that the Gentile believers are 'seed of Abraham' (3:29) and 'sons of God' (4:7) with the more immediate purpose of

⁵⁰ That is, it is not because σπέρμα is the agitators' term, as Martyn 374-75, 377 speculates.

⁵¹ See Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 176.

demonstrating that they, as the Spirit-possessing sons, are the true heirs to God's promised inheritance.

Again we also note Paul's sensitivity to the context in which he develops his arguments. In the concluding statement, Paul adds 'heirs according to God'. At first sight, the phrase διὰ θεοῦ, which replaces κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν in 3:29, seems rather perplexing. To be sure, since promise also accentuates God's initiative, there is no substantial divergence in thought between the two.⁵² Yet there seems to be a good reason for this variation. Despite the fact that Paul argues for the same point of the heirship of the Gentile believers, unlike in 3:15-29, the person Abraham and his promise are not in view; here the idea of σπέρμα and heir κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν would be out of place. Now the talk is directly between God and the Gentile believers as God-adopted sons. Since it is God Himself who has adopted them, they, instead of being 'seed of Abraham', are now 'sons of God' and therefore their heirship is said to be διὰ θεοῦ.⁵³

6. Two sons, but one heir (4:21-31)

That Paul's real concern does not lie in sonship *per se* but in heirship is confirmed yet once more in the 'allegory of Sarah and Hagar' in 4:21-31.⁵⁴ In this paragraph Paul

⁵² In both cases, the point is God's powerful initiative. With most interpreters, e.g., Williams 113; Longenecker 175 (though his talk of 'certainty of possession' is misleading).

⁵³ See Moore-Crispin, 'Galatians 4:1-9' (1989) 218. Romans 8:17 confirms this reading, where believers, as fellow-heirs of Christ, are called 'heirs of God', recalling 'heir διὰ θεοῦ' in Galatians.

⁵⁴ Since Barrett's influential essay, 'Allegory' (1975), this passage is mostly considered as Paul's 'less than successful' revision of his opponents' more natural exegesis (Gen 17). However, Genesis 17 is not a felicitous text for the agitators either since there circumcision, embarrassingly to the agitators, fails to incorporate Ishmael in the family of Abraham. Rightly, Cosgrove, 'Sarah' (1987) 223. As Martyn 305 thinks, the agitators might have deliberately ignored this, but there could have been no chance with Paul (4:30!). Genesis 17 certainly suits the *exclusivist* agenda as in Jubilee but not the missionary purpose of the agitators. After 2:19-4:7, there is nothing surprising in Paul's claim in the allegory. He has not earned most rather nasty abuses he receives from modern exegetes, e.g., Hays, *Echoes* (1989) 111-112; Calvert, 'Abraham' (1993) 5.

establishes a mutually exclusive antithesis between Sarah-Isaac and Hagar-Ishmael, utilising antitheses such as freedom/slavery, promise/flesh and the Spirit/flesh that have already been established (vv. 21-28). Then, through an apt application of Scripture to the present situation through the common denominator of persecution (v. 29), Paul claims that it is not those born of flesh, i.e., those who are under the law, but those born of promise and the Spirit who are the true heirs of the promised inheritance. Transforming Sarah's word into a divine oracle,⁵⁵ Paul declares 'for the son of the slave woman *shall not inherit* (οὐ μὴ κληρονομήσει) with the free woman's son' (v. 30).

For our purpose, it is important to note that the contested issue in this passage is not sonship at all. Both Isaac *and* Ishmael are unreservedly called *sons* (δύο υἱούς) of Abraham (v. 22), which would be the last thing Paul would say if he is arguing for the sonship of the Gentile believers. It is not even that this comment is part of the Scripture Paul merely quotes; this is Paul's own summarizing depiction of the Genesis story. The very fact that he can casually speak of Ishmael as a *son* of Abraham tells us that sonship is not the major point Paul is concerned with.⁵⁶

Paul's argument itself confirms this point. Abraham has two sons, but both cannot share the same inheritance; one of them should be expelled. That Paul affirms the sonship of Ishmael but excludes him from the prospect of inheritance indicates the precise point Paul is getting at with his appeal to the tradition. The question Paul is addressing here then is not 'Who is Abraham's true son?' but 'Which son is the

⁵⁵ In LXX Gen 21:10, these words are Sarah's ... οὐ γὰρ κληρονομήσει ὁ υἱὸς τῆς παιδίσκης ταύτης μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ μου Ἰσαακ. By changing 'my' into 'of the free woman', Paul turns her complaint into a scriptural oracle. Bruce 224-25; Longenecker 217. This is probably not a command to exercise church discipline as Hanson, *Abraham* (1989) 146 and Witherington 338 think. Paul quotes this to answer the question, 'Who gets the inheritance?'

⁵⁶ In Genesis the narrative revolves around the question, 'Who is the true heir of God's promise?' The very late Targum Ps -J. Gen 22:1 has an interesting tradition in which Ishmael and Isaac dispute over the inheritance from Abraham.

rightful heir?' The criterion is no doubt the respective manner of their births: the birth of freedom/promise/Spirit qualifies the son Isaac as the rightful heir; the birth of slavery/law/flesh deprives the child of Hagar of the prospect of future inheritance.⁵⁷ Thus Paul's conclusion that we are not 'children of the slave woman but of the free woman' (v. 31) is not just a statement concerning the present status of the Gentile believers. After the scriptural verdict that only the 'children of the free woman' are to inherit God's inheritance (v. 30), the statement in v. 31 functions as an affirmation that only those allied with the Spirit, as the children of Sarah, will ultimately receive the promised inheritance.⁵⁸

That sonship is not Paul's final point but only a stepping stone toward the heirship of the Gentile believers must be beyond doubt. For Paul the significance of their sonship lies in their privilege as heirs, namely, in their status as bearers of God's promise to inherit the inheritance: 'If you are a son, then, also by God's own act, heirs' (4:7).⁵⁹

7. *Affirmation as warning*

⁵⁷ The point is the law's inability to bring about inheritance. So, Perriman, 'Rhetorical' (1993) 41.

⁵⁸ If we, as many do, take v. 31 as a mere 'status' statement, it becomes a clumsy repetition, almost ruining the flow of Paul's argument. The point has already been made abundantly clear by v. 27, with v. 28 confirming the necessary result of Paul's allegorical association up to the point. Then vv. 29 relates the Genesis story to the situation in Galatia, and v. 30 sets up the scriptural pronouncement that only the children of free woman will receive the inheritance. Then, the conclusion is inevitable: only we, children of the free woman, will inherit God's inheritance! (v. 31).

⁵⁹ Though neglected by most, there are a few exegetes who notice the importance of this move. Burton 209 perceptively comments that this added phrase 'recalls the previous mention of the promise and the inheritance ..., and emphasises the aspect of Abrahamic sonship that is important to the apostle's present purpose'. Barrett, *Freedom* (1985) 36 (cf. 28-9) also explains the significance of sonship not only in terms of 'its implication of intimate personal relationship' but also of the fact that Paul 'is using the concept of inheritance'. Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 52, 69, 85 too takes a clear note of this point, only to muddle it by assuming that Paul speaks of a 'realized inheritance'. Our finding basically agrees with the assessment of Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 158, 189, who takes 'inheritance' rather than 'adoption' as the

In view of the popularity of the realized eschatological reading of Paul's 'sonship' language, it also seems important to remember that in the Judaism of Paul's day the privilege of sonship was an essentially *relational* concept, which carried a corresponding sense of responsibility. Referring to the God-human relationship, the privilege of sonship was not something that could be taken for granted as if it were a kind of possession. It certainly referred to the identity of believers but this identity, bound to God the Father, entailed corresponding responsibility which was never to be compromised. In practical terms, the identity of sonship/heirship was clearly *conditional* on the proper discharge of one's obligations as sons.⁶⁰ Of course, there was always the danger of forgetting this covenantal dynamic of sonship and becoming presumptuous, but warnings of the fatal consequences of such behaviour were not lacking either in the OT (Deut 32:5-6), NT (Mt 3:7-10; Lk 3:7-9; Rom 8:17) or the Rabbinic literature (m. Sanh 10.1-3; m. Ab. 5.19).⁶¹

It is this relational nature of sonship that makes one uncomfortable with the consensus view which sees this motif as the object of Paul's unequivocal affirmation. As we saw in chapter two, for Paul the present disposition of the Galatians virtually amounts to a case of apostasy, which reduces Paul to making a series of scathing accusations concerning their behaviour (1:6; 3:3; 4:8-11, 15-16, 21). Of course, Paul has not given up on the Galatians yet, but in the midst of their gross failure to fulfil their responsibility as God's sons Paul's talk of sonship can hardly be entirely conciliatory. His 'affirmation' of their sonship must have a quite different function in Paul's argument.

overarching theme of Paul's discussion from 3:15-5:1. He is followed by Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 65-6. See also Shaw, *Authority* (1983) 47-48.

⁶⁰ This is emphasized by Hester, *Inheritance* (1968) 39, 92-96; Witherington 290-91. See also Smail, *Forgotten* (1980/1996) 44-46, 151-52.

⁶¹ See Hester, *Inheritance* (1968) 83-85; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 106. Cf. *SB* 1:116-121 (2:523).

Indeed the way Paul clinches his argument about sonship suggests that the enthusiastic affirmation of the 'already' is not his intention at all. Thus we observe that Paul's affirmation of the Galatians' sonship in 4:7 is immediately followed by a frontal attack on the incredible nature of their present behaviour which, according to Paul, effectively strips them of their present sonship (4:8-11). This is hardly a realized eschatological affirmation but a stern warning designed to prevent them from losing their status which holds promise for the future.⁶² By the same token, Paul's argument in 4:21-31 too is drawn up as an explicit warning to 'those who desire to be under the law' (4:21), that is, those who want to return from their present status as 'children of the Spirit' to their former status as 'children of flesh'.⁶³ In the same way, the quotation in v. 30 also serves as a warning for those who desire to be under the law, reminding them of the inevitable consequence of this fatal move.⁶⁴ This is confirmed by the fact that the allegory is immediately followed by Paul's most stern warning in the whole letter (5:1-4). As part of Paul's response to the problem of apostasy, his repeated affirmation of son-heirship 'in Christ' (3:26-29) and 'through the Spirit' (4:6-7) does not function as a celebration of the 'already' but as an urgent appeal to remain 'in Christ' and 'in the Spirit', the only foundation of their heirship.

Conclusion

⁶² Cf. Hanson, *Abraham* (1988) 139.

⁶³ This intention seems to explain Paul's preoccupation with the 'slavery' side of his allegory which leaves the positive counterpart incomplete, a phenomenon noted by Cosgrove, 'Sarah' (1987) 224-26; Jobes, 'Jerusalem' (1993) 301.

⁶⁴ Romans chapter eight is instructive at this point. There too, Paul is concerned with believers' son-heirship, with sonship receiving more attention than in Galatians. There, interestingly, Paul's affirmation of believers' sonship is placed in a clearly eschatological context (vv. 6, 11, 13, 17, 23-25) and combined with a strong imperative of having the indwelling Spirit (v. 9, εἰπερ), namely, of being led by the Spirit by putting the practices of body to death with the Spirit (v. 13, ἐν).

Thus far we have examined various motifs in Paul's argument which can be grouped under the concept of 'sonship': 'son of Abraham' (3:6-7); 'sons of God' (3:26); 'seed of Abraham' (3:29); 'sons (of God)' (4:5-7); 'children of promise/Spirit' (4:21-31).

Now we are in a position to draw some important conclusions.

First, in each case in which the 'sonship' language occurs, it does not stand as the main subject of argument, but always functions as a supporting motif for another theme. The context in which these motifs are put to use is either justification by faith (3:6-7), or equality in Christ (3:26-8), or, most notably, the heirship of the Gentile believers (3:29; 4:7, 30-31). It is these and not 'sonship' that constitute the central point. Hence, as far as Paul's argument goes, we cannot consider 'sonship' as a central issue in Galatians. However weighty a theological concept it may be, it should not allow us to ignore the flow of Paul's argument itself which is heading in another direction. Therefore, the impression of 'realized eschatology' inherent in the notion of present sonship should be given up. As far as Paul does emphasize the present status of the Gentile believers as sons and seed, the sense of 'already' is not completely missing, but it is radically qualified by the overall thrust of the argument for which the motif works. The supposition that with his focus on 'sonship' Paul emphasizes what has *already* been accomplished in Christ should also be given up. Sonship is never the central point of Paul's argument, and the danger Paul perceives in the present crisis forbids any unreserved affirmation of the 'already'. The illusion of 'realized eschatology' associated with the motif of sonship should not be allowed to dominate the overall outlook of Paul's argument.

Secondly, taken in context, the unequivocal affirmations about the 'seed of Abraham' (3:29) and 'sons (of God)' (4:5-7) are not made in order to emphasise the believers' *present* status. When Paul speaks of the Gentile believers as 'seed' and

‘sons’, he means to show that they are ‘heirs’, namely, those who carry God’s promise for the future inheritance. His affirmations are, therefore, deliberately open-ended and conspicuously futuristic.⁶⁵ Paul is not looking backward; on the contrary, he is pointing to what still lies in the future. Here we should not falsify Paul’s perspective on the Galatian situation: whatever the Galatians may say, as far as Paul is concerned, they are simply on the verge of abandoning their faith in Christ. In this context then Paul’s seeming ‘affirmation’ functions not so much as a positive celebration of their *present* privilege as a grave warning against their present deviation from the truth of the gospel. In effect, Paul is saying, ‘Do not be mistaken. Only those who persist in faith will be able to enjoy the promised inheritance; those who fall back onto the way of the law are sure to forfeit any prospect of such blessing!’ (Cf. 6:7; 5:21).

In view of the current consensus on the idea of ‘realized inheritance’ as the thrust of Paul’s thought, however, our final judgment on the future eschatological outlook of Paul’s argument must wait until we have examined the ideas of ‘promise’ and ‘inheritance’. Having clarified the limited function of Paul’s sonship language, however, we are in a much better position to assess the true character of Paul’s discussion on these themes. This is the task we will take up in the next two chapters.

⁶⁵ To be sure, most interpreters speak of ‘realized inheritance’, which, however, is begging the question. The future eschatological nature of ‘inheritance’ will be discussed in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER FIVE

PAUL'S VIEW OF PROMISE

In the previous chapter we examined Paul's use of 'sonship' language and suggested that Paul's major concern does not lie in sonship itself but in the heirship it grounds: sonship matters because its possession also means being the *heirs* of God's promised inheritance. This means that a proper understanding of Paul's argument much depends on a correct interpretation of 'promise' and 'inheritance,' two closely related concepts originating from the Abrahamic tradition. In this chapter we will first take up the motif of 'promise' and examine its function in Paul's reading of the Abrahamic tradition. This will then be followed by a study 'inheritance' in the next chapter.

1. A fulfilled promise in Galatians?

In recent scholarly discussion it is a commonplace to understand the concept of promise within the framework of 'promise and fulfilment': the promise(s) given to Abraham and his seed have now been effectively realized through Christ and the coming of the Spirit.¹ Abraham received the promise from God; Christ has fulfilled it. While it is not explicitly denied that Christ too is the recipient of the promise, most scholarly construal of Paul's argument depicts Christ mainly as its fulfiller. Thus Gentile believers too are primarily described as the beneficiaries of that 'fulfilled promise', not the recipients of the promise itself. According to this view, the focus then falls necessarily on Christ, who marks the 'Glaubenszeit mit ihrer Erfüllung der

¹ Hanson, *Abraham* (1988) begins his study with these words: 'Since the gospel according to Paul is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise, ...' (15). See also e.g., Hooker, 'Covenantal nomism' (1982) 51-52; Watson, *Text* (1994) 190-191, 195.

Verheißung'.² Ridderbos speaks for many: 'it was He to whom the promise pointed and in whom it was materialized.'³ If this is the case, it follows that the more Paul speaks of 'promise', in reality, the more he says about its 'fulfilment'; Paul's talk of promise becomes an exposition of his realized eschatology.

With the lack of any explicit statement expressing the idea of fulfilment, this view finds its exegetical ground in two crucial decisions: 1) the identification of the Abrahamic 'blessing' in 3:8-14 with the 'promise' in 3:15-29, and 2) the interpretation of 'the promise of the Spirit' in 3:14 as the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise discussed in 3:15-29. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that these widely held views are exegetically flawed. We shall first deal with these two consensus views, before tracing Paul's argument to see if he actually speaks of the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise.

2. 'Blessing' and 'promise'

In scholarly interpretation of Galatians, it is customary to connect the 'blessing' in 3:6-14 with the 'promise' in 3:15-29 and 4:21-31: God's pronouncement of the future 'blessing of the Gentiles in Abraham' (3:8; cf. Gen 12:3; 18:18) represents the content of God's promise given to 'Abraham and to his seed' (3:16). The result is the popular notion of 'Segensverheißung'.⁴ Then, on the basis of Paul's reference to 'the promise of the Spirit' (3:14), this promise of blessing in turn is explicitly identified as the gift of the Holy Spirit (3:14).⁵ The promise God gave to Abraham and to his seed was the promise that God would bless the Gentiles through Abraham, which was effectively

² Mußner 254.

³ Ridderbos 138.

⁴ This is the consensus. E.g., Martyn 355; Hübner, *Theologie* (1990) 74; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 95, 97; Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 133 ('inheritance').

⁵ E.g., Hanson, *Abraham* (1989) 126, 128; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 394-95.

fulfilled when God bestowed the gift of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles who were ἐκ πίστεως.

The fusion of these two arguments enables scholars to make a very significant claim for the notion of the fulfilled promise. We will later have to discuss the important phrase ‘the promise of the Spirit’ (3:14), but even apart from that, another crucial conclusion is claimed. As Beker observes,⁶ in 3:10-14 Christ comes in as the one who ‘enables’ the Abrahamic blessing by removing the curse of the law, while in 3:15-29, he is ‘the sole recipient of the promise’. By equating blessing with promise, Christ the ‘enabler of the blessing’ can now be described as the ‘fulfiller of the promise’, an idea which is *missing* in Paul’s discussion of the ‘promise’ itself in 3:15-29. Since he is the one who establishes the ‘promised’ blessing, he is the fulfilment of the promise.⁷ By his talk of promise and inheritance, then, Paul means the ‘fulfilled’ promise, namely, the ‘realized’ inheritance.⁸

In our view, however, this (con)fusion of ‘blessing’ and ‘promise’ with the resultant notion of *Segensverheißung* is an exegetical slip fatal to a proper understanding of Paul’s point. To be sure, since both 3:8-14 and 3:15-29 appeal to the same Abraham, one can argue that these two passages are to be taken together. However, we cannot begin by assuming that Paul uses this tradition always for the same purpose and with the same logic. Before we conflate the two, we first have to examine each argument in its own context and find out what Paul is up to in each case.

⁶ Beker’s phrase is ‘enabler of the promise’. *Paul* (1980) 47-52.

⁷ See, among others, Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 179-184 who speaks of ‘die Verwirklichung der Segensverheißung durch das πνεῦμα Ἀβραάμ’ and therefore ‘die Erfüllung der Verheißung in Christus’ (115, 117). Even Beker, *Paul* (1980) 50, who detects ‘inconsistency’ between 3:10-14 and 3:15-29, still considers Christ as ‘the blessing and fulfilment of the promise’.

⁸ This is the *opinio communis*. Foerster, *TDNT* 3:785; Hester, ‘The “Heir”’ (1967) 118-125. See also 6.2 below.

Our claim is that Paul pursues a different track in each argument, and thus they should not be conflated. In support of our claim, we submit the following four points.

First, in 3:8-14 ‘promise’ does not play any role in Paul’s argument apart from ‘the promise of the Spirit’ which comes, as we shall soon show, from the prophetic tradition. Here God’s pronouncement of Gentile blessing serves as the divine warrant for Paul’s claim that justification is by faith. For this reason, it is an act of ‘proclaiming the gospel’ in advance (προεσηγγερίσαστο) instead of ‘uttering promises’ (ἐρρέθησαν αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι) (v. 8; cf. v. 16). God’s ‘gospel message’ that the Gentiles will be blessed in Abraham occurs in Genesis 12:3 and 18:18, both of which declare the purpose of Abraham’s election: God chose Abraham so that all the Gentiles might be blessed through him.⁹ For this reason, in Paul’s thought this is not a ‘*promise*’ to *Abraham* and his seed, but the ‘*gospel*’ for the Gentiles preached in advance in anticipation of the fact that God will justify them by faith (v. 8). Paul’s use of two different grammatical subjects seems indicative of his intention here.

‘Foreknowledge’ and ‘preaching the gospel’ obviously belong to God, but Paul posits ‘the Scripture’ as the subject of this foreknowledge, while God comes in as the subject of gospel itself, i.e., the justifier of the Gentiles: προῖδοῦσα ἡ γραφή ὅτι ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοῖ τὰ ἔθνη ὁ θεός (v. 8a). That is, for Paul the statement in v. 8b does not function primarily as God’s promise to Abraham but as a scriptural testimony to the ‘gospel’ that God justifies the Gentiles by faith. If by this oracle Paul means ‘the covenant ratified by God’ (v. 17), the avoidance of ‘God’ in favour of ‘the Scripture’ becomes quite puzzling.¹⁰

⁹ In Genesis the pronouncement is certainly God’s promise of blessing intended for Abraham, with the emphasis on אֵל (ἐν σοί) as the key to the blessing for the nations.

¹⁰ *Contra* Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 108-9. Since he considers the quoted oracle to be the essence of God’s ‘promise’ given to Abraham (3:15-29), he has to ignore the functional

Secondly, accordingly, the change of emphasis is also unmistakable. In 3:8-14 Paul speaks for the Gentiles and not primarily for Abraham.¹¹ In the original Genesis context, it is Abraham himself that God is concerned about. Announcing that ‘all the nations will be blessed in you’ (12:3a), his main emphasis clearly falls on ‘in you’ (יְכֻלְּךָ; ἐν σοί), singling out Abraham as the key to the blessing of all nations and thereby making his oracle a word of blessing for Abraham. In Galatians, however, the thrust changes. Paul’s main concern is not Abraham himself but the Gentile believers. His burden at this point is to demonstrate the truth that God justifies *the Gentiles* only by faith and not by the law, and that is the reason why he appeals to this particular passage, namely, a passage which explicitly embraces the Gentiles as an original part of God’s plan. The upshot of Paul’s exegesis is, no doubt, his characterization of Abraham, the key to blessing, as ὁ πιστὸς Ἀβραάμ (3:6, 9): the Gentiles will be blessed ‘in the believing Abraham’. As Paul himself explains later, that the Gentiles are blessed ‘in Abraham’ really means that the ‘believing’ Gentiles are blessed ‘together with’ (σὺν) the ‘believing’ Abraham;¹² just as Abraham was blessed by his faith, the Gentiles will also be blessed by the same faith. Hence God’s word of blessing for Abraham has become for Paul scriptural evidence for the truth of the gospel that οἱ ἐκ πίστεως will be blessed σὺν τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ (3:9). This explains the unmistakable emphasis laid on εἰς τὰ ἔθνη in his conclusion of the section: ‘so that *to the Gentiles* the blessing of Abraham might come in Christ Jesus’ (3:14a).¹³ From 3:15 onwards, however, Paul’s interest centres on the person of

difference between ‘the Scripture’ and ‘God’. To be sure, the Scripture ultimately traces back to God Himself; what is important is, however, to discern the intention behind this variation.

¹¹ Hays, *Echoes* (1989) 105-111 observes that Paul’s hermeneutic here is ‘ecclesiocentric’.

¹² The comparison is between Abraham and believers. Rightly, Betz 143 n. 41 and 47; Dunn 165-6; Hong, ‘Misrepresent’ (1994) 169.

¹³ With Bruce 156-7; Fung 140; Longenecker 115; Dunn 164; *idem*, ‘Theology’ 132; Hanson, *Abraham* (1989) 84.

Abraham, for the simple reason that now it is the experience of Abraham himself that provides the proof for Paul's case. God gave the promise 'to Abraham and to his seed' (v.16), and showed his grace to him 'through promise' (v.18). Therefore, despite the fact that both 3:6-14 and 3:15-29 are based on the Abrahamic tradition, the two arguments are not designed to make the same point. God's 'promise' that God would give *Abraham* the land is certainly different from his 'gospel' that *the Gentiles* will be blessed through him.¹⁴

Thirdly, we should not attribute undue weight to the temporary motif of 'blessing'. As we have just seen, Paul cites Genesis 12:3 (18:18) because the passage proves that the Gentiles are part of God's original plan. Strictly speaking, then, the idea of blessing is somewhat inadvertently carried in from the passage Paul needed for this reason. Since the 'Gentile' passage happens to speak of their 'blessing', Paul does incorporate it into his discussion, defining it in terms of 'justification', which, however, does not mean that the idea itself is a major theme in Paul's argument.¹⁵ Unlike such motifs as sonship, promise, inheritance, all of which take indispensable places in Paul's later argumentation, 'blessing' does nothing more than prove the fact that the Gentiles are indeed part of God's original plan of justification (vv. 9, 14). This limited function for the theme explains why it does not appear again in Paul's subsequent argument, most notably in vv. 15-29.¹⁶ Picking up such a minor theme and connecting it to 'promise' to produce the idea of 'Segensverheißung' would be highlighting a point Paul himself has little or no intention to advertise.

¹⁴ S. K. Williams 87 and 'Promise' (1988) 710, rarely, takes a special note of this fact. 'The gospel that Abraham heard' is surely different from 'the promise he and his seed received'.

¹⁵ Cf. Sanders, *Law* (1983) 21.

¹⁶ Rightly, Burton 162; Martyn 321-23; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 395. But their speculation that the word belongs to the agitators is unnecessary.

Fourthly, in 3:15-29 the promise Paul refers to is the specific promise of the land, which makes it very difficult to include the oracle of blessing within this ‘promise’ explicitly given to Abraham. In v. 15 onward Paul’s bold christological exegesis depends critically on the fact that God’s promises were addressed to Abraham καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ (v. 16), and not καὶ τοῖς σπέρμασιν in the plural. This grammatical argument makes it clear that at this point Paul grounds his thesis not on the tradition in general but on a specific text or texts which contain this very phrase. The possible candidates are either Genesis 13:15 or 17:8, where God promises to give ‘the land of Canaan’ σοι [Abraham] καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου.¹⁷ This phrase also occurs in 24:7, where Abraham reminds God of his earlier promises.¹⁸

Gen 13:15 ὅτι πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν ... σοὶ δώσω αὐτὴν καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου

Gen 17:8 καὶ δώσω σοι καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου μετὰ σὲ τὴν γῆν ...

Gen 24:7 καὶ ὤμοσέν μοι λέγων σοὶ δώσω τὴν γῆν ταύτην καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου ...

In all these passages, God’s promise refers to the specific promise that God would give the land of Canaan to Abraham ‘and to his seed’. That is, when Paul speaks of God’s promise(s) in this context, he must have the ‘promise of the land’ in mind.¹⁹

On the other hand, Paul’s point about ‘and to your seed’ cannot apply to God’s oracle of ‘blessing’ which is addressed to Abraham but never ‘and to your seed’. In

¹⁷ See Lightfoot 142.

¹⁸ MT and Sinaiticus omit καὶ in 24:7. In Gen. 12:7 and 15:8 too, the phrase, τῷ σπέρματί σου, occurs, but in these cases it is exclusively to Abraham’s seed and not to Abraham himself that God promises the land.

¹⁹ Daube, *Rabbinic* (1956) 438 lists two further points: 1) ‘it was in connection with a promise of the land that the Rabbis resorted to an interpretation of ‘seed’ with which Paul’s has much in common’; 2) The promise of the land was the general basis for chronological speculations. Also see Burton 185; Schlier 144; Mußner 238; Bruce 171-2; Dunn 185; Betz 157 n. 34; Hester, *Inheritance* (1968) 77; Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 160. Even these, however, still relate the ‘promise’ to the oracle of ‘blessing’ in vv. 8-9.

Genesis 12:3 the oracle is given exclusively to Abraham without his seed coming into the picture at all. In Genesis 18:18 even Abraham himself is referred to as a third person. That is, Paul cannot have drawn such a grammatical argument from this oracle of 'blessing'.²⁰ Hence God's promise given to Abraham 'and to his seed' must refer to the promise of the land and not to 'blessing'.²¹ Naturally, in 3:15 onwards it is the idea of 'inheritance' (κληρονομία), the real content of the promise, that takes up the central place (3:29; 4:7; 4:21-31). Yet, as we have noted, the motif of blessing does not occur beyond 3:14, while the talk of promise and inheritance abounds. This is a phenomenon which is difficult, if not impossible, to explain if Paul is thinking of the blessing of Abraham as the specific content of the inheritance. It seems that the role of 'blessing' is limited within 3:6-14, and in 3:15 onwards Paul, having made his point and thus leaving it behind, takes a different route of promise and inheritance to continue his argument.²²

Based on these considerations we submit that the 'blessing' is not to be conflated with the 'promise' to produce the composite notion of 'the promise of the blessing' since 3:8-14 and 3:15-29 are two distinct arguments designed to score different points. That is, it is exegetically ill-advised to translate Christ 'the enabler of the blessing' (3:14) into Christ 'the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise'. Whether Paul considers Christ as the one who fulfils the promise is a matter we shall discuss later. At this point, it is important to realize that 3:8-14, where Christ brings about the blessing of Abraham, does not support the assumption of the 'fulfilled promise'. In 'the old days' God preached the gospel about the blessing of the Gentiles, and Paul, observing the

²⁰ *Contra* Fitzmyer 787; Hong, 'Misrepresent' (1994) 172-3.

²¹ Martyn 339-340 states that 'Paul focuses his exegetical attention on the text of Gen 17:8', a text which speaks of the land, not 'blessing'. Yet, he goes on to assert that the 'promise' here refers to the 'blessing' and thus Paul ignores the motif of the land. Similarly, Davies, *Land* (1974) 179; Bruce 171-2; Wright, *Climax* (1991) 174; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 180.

²² There is a clear break between 3:14 and 3:15.

gift of the Spirit (3:14b), understands that this gospel of blessing is now at work (3:14a). And he, in turn, presents this as a sure proof for the truth of justification by faith. Here nothing is said about the Abrahamic 'promise', for which we have to go to 3:15-29. For now, it suffices to affirm that the gospel of blessing (justification) is *not* to be taken as the content of the Abrahamic promise.²³

3. *The Promise of the Spirit (3:14b)*

A more important *crux interpretum* is the interesting phrase 'the promise of the Spirit' in 3:14b. The verse consists of double ἵνα clauses, both explicating the purpose of Christ's death on the cross: 'so that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles; so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit (τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος) through faith'. The genitive here is most probably appositional, specifying the Spirit as the content of the promise: 'the promised Spirit'.²⁴ That with this expression Paul intends the reality of the Spirit actually conferred on the Galatian congregation is manifest (3:1-5; 4:6). The point that concerns us here is Paul's combination of the 'Spirit' and 'promise' within a single concept.

In view of the heavy use of the word 'promise' in subsequent argument (3:15-29; 4:21-31), most scholars infer that with his reference to 'the promise of the Spirit' in 3:14 Paul is redefining the content of the *Abrahamic* promise in terms of the Spirit. The obvious consequence of this decision is that the Abrahamic promise (3:8; 15ff.) has now been 'fulfilled' in the form of God's bestowal of the Spirit upon believers. In Burton's words, 'The apostle refers to the promise to Abraham and has learned to interpret this as having reference to the gift of the Spirit'. And this 'blessing of the

²³ In Romans four too, justification and promise are distinct from each other: Abraham was 'justified' because of his faith in God's 'promise'.

²⁴ So, Burton 176 ('metonymic'); Bligh, *Greek* (1966) 140 and most others.

Spirit, as the initial gift of the new life, is the earnest, and so the fulfilment of the promise'.²⁵ A survey of commentaries clearly shows that *it is in fact on this single phrase that scholars ground their idea of 'fulfilled promise'*.²⁶

The effect of this reading is that, by connecting the 'promise' in the Abrahamic tradition with its present 'fulfilment', it highlights the eschatological decisiveness of the Spirit for the early Christians. It also has the advantage of a strong connection with Paul's following discussions. As Longenecker notes, the 'promise' in 3:14 'sets up the presentations of 3:15-4:31, for thereafter it is the word "promise" that dominates the discussions'.²⁷ If this is in fact what Paul means by the 'promise of the Spirit', it unmistakably delivers a note of realized eschatology, since it means that the ancient promise of inheritance uttered to Abraham *has already been fulfilled* by God's bestowal of the Spirit upon the Gentile believers. From this it also follows that Paul's subsequent discussion of 'promise' and 'inheritance' should refer entirely to the 'fulfilled promise' and 'realized inheritance' with the Spirit as its main reference.

Martyn speaks for many when he says:

... equating the promise with the Spirit, Paul assures the Galatians that they have been recipients of that promise for some time, having received the Spirit when they were grasped by the gospel of the crucified Christ (3:2). Coming as the Spirit, God's promise institutes and constitutes a new state of affairs.²⁸

²⁵ Berger, 'Abraham' (1966) 47 speaks for many: 'In Gal 3 wird das Heilsgut der Christen, das Pneuma, das sie empfangen (3, 2-5), dargestellt als Inhalt der Verheißung an Abraham'.

²⁶ This is the consensus. E.g., Vos, 'Eschatological' (1912) 101; Schniewind/Friedrich *TDNT* 2:584; Dunn, *Theology* (1993) 93; Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 79; Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 153-4; Silva, 'Eschatological' (1994) 152; Kertelge, 'Gesetz' (1984) 387; Hartman, '3.15-4.11' (1993) 133, 136.

²⁷ Longenecker 125. Similarly, Dahl, *Studies* (1977) 132: 'affirmations about the Spirit...constitute the framework of Paul's discussion of the promise to Abraham'. See also Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 156; Hanson, *Abraham* (1989) 127.

²⁸ Martyn 323, 353.

Focusing on the motif of the Spirit as the fulfilment of the promise and the content of the inheritance, then, Paul's argument in Galatians is a pointed case for a 'realized eschatology'.

We have, however, to register our objection to this widely held, but perhaps also superficial, interpretation of the phrase. Despite the use of the same word 'promise', there are several problems in associating 'the promise of the Spirit' with 'the *Abrahamic* promise'.

First of all, we begin with the observation that this interpretation is not explicit in Paul's argument itself. Nowhere in the letter does Paul actually claim that the Spirit should be seen as the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise. This is the idea scholars detect from the way Paul speaks of the subject, and the only ground for such conclusion is the proximity of 'the promise of the Spirit' in 3:14b and the discussion of the Abrahamic 'promise' in 3:16 onwards. Does then Paul bring these two promise phrases close to each other (v. 14b and v. 16) to make a subtle yet radical and innovative claim that *the Spirit* means the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise of *the land*?

Secondly, it is not easy, however, to see on what grounds Paul has come to associate the Abrahamic promise of the land with the Spirit. The reference to the 'promise' is abrupt and its identification with the Spirit is very casual, lacking any explanation.²⁹ We get the impression that the idea is familiar to the Galatian ears. This familiarity cannot be assumed, however, for the association of the Spirit and the Abrahamic promise is a connection *unattested* in any other contemporary literature.³⁰

²⁹ This is rightly emphasized by Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 85. He then begs the question by using this as the evidence for the prevalence of such identification.

³⁰ The claim of Dunn 186 that Paul draws the idea from the already established early Christian understanding of 'the Spirit as the beginning of inheritance' is simply unfounded. Where do we have evidence for such notion?

One may argue that Paul somehow ‘has learned to interpret this as having reference to the gift of the Spirit’.³¹ Yet, in a polemical situation in which Paul has to fight with his opponents over the right interpretation of the Abrahamic tradition, this precarious reinterpretation of the ‘promise’ as the Spirit must have struck them as an expression of sheer desperation. If Paul had really meant that the Abrahamic promise was that of the Spirit, he should have given a justification for this, which he fails to do anywhere in his letters. In the context there is nothing to compel the readers to make this connection. For the Jews of Paul’s time the Abrahamic promise of the land was a well-established tradition. To be sure, this promise had already come to be understood as eschatological and universal, but the core of the ‘land’ remained solid.³² Thus, *the historical constraint is probably too great to allow such a bold equation allegedly present in 3:14b*. A mere reference to ‘the promise of the Spirit’, a well-established motif on its own terms, would hardly have been enough to make the Galatians and the agitators notice such a claim. That Paul at this point has not even mentioned ‘promise’ also renders such an intention improbable.

Thirdly, in the subsequent use of the word ‘promise’, Paul freely alternates from plural to singular. The plural αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι in v. 16 switches into the singular τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν in v. 17. V. 18 maintains the singular, ἐξ ἐπαγγελίας, but once again the plural comes back, τῶν ἐπαγγελιῶν, in v. 21, only to be followed by yet another singular, ἡ ἐπαγγελία, in v. 22. If Paul had the specific Spirit in mind, this variation between ‘promises’ and ‘promise’, especially the repeated use of the plural, would be inexplicable. With the Spirit now present in the Galatian congregation, he would have

³¹ Burton 177.

³² See Brueggeman, *Land* (1977) 179: ‘No matter how spiritualized, transcendentalized, or existentialized, it has its primary focus undeniably on land’. Also Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 160.

certainly used the singular invariably. As is often noted,³³ that Paul speaks of ‘promises’ in the plural is based on the fact that God’s promise to Abraham was made not just once but on many different occasions. If so, this makes it more probable that Paul when speaking of ‘promise’ or ‘promises’ is still thinking of the concrete promises uttered by God rather than the Spirit as the singular and realized content of the promise.

Fourthly, v. 18 clearly identifies the ‘inheritance’ with the content of God’s promise to Abraham. In this verse, it is Paul’s controversial claim that this inheritance cannot be ‘from the law’ but only ‘from promise’. On the other hand, the fact that the Spirit came ‘by faith’ and not ‘from works of the law’ is simply assumed to be self-evident (3:2-5).³⁴ It may be that Paul means to claim that the Spirit is in fact the inheritance promised by God, but Paul’s discussion of the latter too is focused on its coming from faith rather than its identity with the Spirit.

Fifthly, after 3:14, the Spirit does not appear, at least explicitly, until 4:6, while the talk of promise abounds. In 3:15-29, where talk of the Abrahamic promise leads to the affirmation of sonship, the Spirit does not come into the picture at all. On the other hand, in his next argument (4:1-7), where he relates sonship to the gift of the Spirit, the notion of the Abrahamic promise is not in view.³⁵ Under the assumed relation between the two, this fact is not easy to explain. Having already identified the promise as the Spirit, why would he still speak ambiguously of ‘promise’ and even confusingly of ‘promises’ without referring to the Spirit, not even once? This at least tells us that such an identification is not important for his subsequent argument. If so, why would he take such an unnecessarily provocative step?

³³ E.g., Burton 181; Bligh, *Greek* (1966) 143; Williams, ‘Promise’ (1988) 712-3.

³⁴ This is widely noted. E.g., Longenecker 102; Dunn 153.

³⁵ See the discussion below.

S. K. Williams, in his study of the ‘promise’ in Galatians, makes a very illuminating observation concerning this point. Having surveyed much scholarly interpretation of the theme, he discovers that most scholars, as they move on to the promise in 3:15-4:31, tend to ‘forget’ the identification of the promise with the Spirit in 3:14. He laments this inconsistency and proceeds to present his own reading of the Genesis story, trying to show how the Abrahamic promise can be understood in terms of the promise of the Spirit.³⁶ If the promise of the Spirit does refer to the Abrahamic promise, Williams’s complaint is quite telling and should be answered.

A different question can be posed, however. If Paul considers the Spirit as the real content of the promise, why is it that his discussion of the promise stands on its own independently of the motif of the Spirit, thereby inducing scholars to forget the latter? The very fact that Paul’s discussion of the promise (3:15-29) makes scholars forget about the Spirit renders the forced identification of ‘the promise of the Spirit’ with the Abrahamic promise questionable. As Fee realizes, in 3:15-29 ‘the “promise” does not much refer directly to the Spirit, despite v. 14, but to the “inheritance”’.³⁷ That is, Paul obviously does not feel the need to invoke the Spirit as he discusses the promise, which makes the latter’s alleged identity with the Spirit irrelevant, and therefore also improbable.

In 4:21-31 Paul does associate the Abrahamic ‘promise’ with the Spirit. Paul’s initial antithesis of *κατὰ σάρκα* and *δι’ ἐπαγγελίας* describing two different ways of begetting children (v. 23) is later developed into the more familiar antithesis of *κατὰ σάρκα* and *κατὰ πνεῦμα* (v. 29). Thus it becomes clear that here

³⁶ ‘Promise’ (1988) 709-720. See also Hartman, ‘Gal 3.15-4.11’ (1993) 133, 136-7; Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 153-4. William’s attempt to connect the Spirit with various Abrahamic promises is far-fetched, to say the least, which eloquently illustrates the problem of the consensus view.

³⁷ Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 396. Yet, misled by his reading of 3:14 and 4:4-7, he too ends up equating the Spirit with inheritance.

δι' ἐπαγγελίας and κατὰ πνεῦμα are functionally identical. On a superficial reading, this interchange between the two phrases does seem to suggest that Paul equates the promise with the Spirit.³⁸ This is not so, however.

In this passage, Paul bases his allegorical interpretation on the fact that Isaac was born of God's promise in contrast to Ishmael who was born 'according to flesh'. Thus, the 'promise' in this context most probably refers to the promise of an 'offspring-heir' to Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 15, 17). Here the dominant idea is God's powerful intervention in contrast to the fleshly way of procuring an heir. From this intervention of God through the Spirit in the Galatian churches Paul discerns precisely the same principle of 'according to promise' working in the birth of the Gentile believers.³⁹ The identity Paul detects between the promise and the Spirit lies in their *function* of denoting God's powerful initiative and not in their actual content.⁴⁰ Nothing in this passage suggests that the Spirit is the *content* of God's promise made to Abraham.

Another aspect of God's promise also comes into play. In the Genesis narrative, a question which runs through the whole narrative is 'Who is the real heir?' Since here the promise means that of the land, the real question becomes, 'Who will inherit this promise of the land as Abraham's legitimate heir?' To this question, God's consistent answer is that it is only Isaac, the son born of God's promise, who is the genuine

³⁸ Silva, 'Eschatological' (1994) 156 speak of a correspondence between the Spirit and the promise, by which he actually means the identity of the two (cf. 152). Similarly, Vos, *Pneumatologie* (1973) 92-93; Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 157; Barclay, *Obedying* (1988) 89; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 414.

³⁹ This is noted by Schweizer, *TDNT* 6:429; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 415-416; Fung 214, though they take this as the ground for identifying the promise with the Spirit. Cf. Hays, *Echoes* (1989) 115; Martyn, 'Events' (1991) 175-76.

⁴⁰ In 4:21-31, since Isaac is born 'according to promise', this promise necessarily refers to that of progeny. This promise of a 'seed' cannot be the same as the promise of 'inheritance' indicated in 4:30 and discussed in 3:15-29, the promise uttered to Abraham 'and to his seed'. In the former, the seed is the content of God's promise; in the latter its recipient. In Roman 4 too, both the promise of a son given to Abraham alone (4:18-21) and the promise of the land given 'to Abraham *and to his seed*' (4:13) come into play without being conflated with each other.

‘heir’. The same logic is present in Paul’s argument. Just as the son of promise was considered the genuine heir, now it is only those who are born κατὰ πνεῦμα that are considered as God’s true heirs (4:30). And here it is also to be noted that the promise of the land itself, which the Gentile believers ‘shall inherit’, is not spiritualized in terms of the Spirit. As we shall see once again later, Paul’s point is that the Spirit *produces* heirs and not that it *is* the promised inheritance.⁴¹

The way Paul interprets the same tradition in Romans also speaks against the equation of the Spirit with the Abrahamic promise. Romans chapter four, where the figure of Abraham is the subject matter, is a close parallel to Galatians 3:15-18 in that in both places the idea of promise is associated with the notion of inheritance. There too ἡ ἐπαγγελία τῷ Ἀβραάμ stands prominently, occurring four times (4:13, 14, 16, 20). Though some try to find a significant difference between the two arguments,⁴² their basic thrusts remain the same in both cases. The central thesis of Paul’s argument (‘by faith, not by law’) is the same; even the *reductio ad absurdum* used to affirm the validity of the promise (Gal 3:18; Rom 4:14) is the same. In this *later* discussion of the tradition, the Abrahamic promise (ἡ ἐπαγγελία τῷ Ἀβραάμ) is now unambiguously identified as the promise that Abraham and his seed should be the inheritor of the world, that is, the eschatological land (τὸ κληρονόμον αὐτὸν εἶναι κόσμου, 4:13).⁴³ Does this mean that Paul, having identified the promise as the Spirit in Galatians, is now reverting to a more literal understanding of the motif?

⁴¹ It is therefore mistaken to speak of the ‘inheritance of sonship’ as some do. E.g., Hester, *Inheritance* (1968) 90-91, 97-97; Dunn 188.

⁴² Beker, *Paul* (1980) 37-93 discerns an array of contextual differences, which, according to his view, illustrates the contingent character of Galatians. Though his reading is often very perceptive, he tends to exaggerate the difference between Galatians and Romans, somewhat due to his selective reading. No wonder he often has to state his case with ‘except’ and ‘apart from’.

⁴³ See Dahl, *Studies* (1977) 129-30; Sanders, *Law* (1983) 46; Käsemann, *Romans* (1980) 118-120; Dunn, *Romans* (1988) 212-213. Dunn’s assumption of ‘fulfilment’ is puzzling in view of Rom 8:17.

The motif of Abrahamic promise occurs once more in Romans chapter nine and this time the motif is introduced in connection with sonship. This passage finds its parallel in Galatians 4:21-31. After an initial absolute use of the word ‘the promises’ (αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι) as part of Israelite privileges, Paul introduces in 9:8 the familiar antithesis between τὰ τέκνα τῆς σαρκὸς and τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας; one we also find in Galatians 4:21-31. Then in v. 9 Paul specifies the content of this promise as the promise of a son recorded in Genesis 18:10, and not of future inheritance of the world as it was in Romans chapter four. This shows that Paul is not using ‘promise’ indiscriminately as a shorthand for something in his own mind but with a clear sensitivity to the diverse contexts in which God’s promises were actually made. Again, the Spirit is nowhere in view. Even the parallelism of δι’ ἐπαγγελίας and κατὰ πνεῦμα is missing.

Based on these considerations we submit that, except for the mere coincidence of the word ‘promise’, there is no exegetical evidence anywhere in Galatians to suggest that ‘the promise of the Spirit’ in 3:14 refers to the fulfilment of the Abrahamic ‘promise(s)’. The concept of ‘the promise of the Spirit’ therefore should be *irrelevant* to our discussion of the Abrahamic promise in the rest of the letter.⁴⁴

4. *The Spirit as the fulfilment of prophetic promise*

The notion of ‘the promise of the Spirit’ may well be a well-established tradition grounded on the shared belief of the early Christians that the gift of the Holy Spirit signified the eschatological fulfilment of God’s promises given through prophets such

⁴⁴ The question of Hays, *Faith* (1983) 210-212, ‘But how can Paul pose this equation?’, to which he attempts to answer in terms of his notion of ‘narrative-logic’, is an unsolicited one. Isaiah 44:3, the text he adduces as part of his answer but Paul does not, has nothing to do with the *Abrahamic* promise. On the contrary, this certainly belongs to the prophetic promise of the Spirit, and thus supports our interpretation rather than his.

as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Joel.⁴⁵ There are some interesting data that point in this direction. First, in Acts 2:33 an almost identical phrase, τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου, occurs as part of Peter's Pentecostal sermon. In 2:39 the same idea is expressed absolutely as 'the promise'. The phrase, τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πατρὸς, also expresses the same conviction (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:4). There the phrase expresses the belief that the coming of the Spirit marks the fulfilment of God's 'promise' given through the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-32). In this case the promise is explicitly that of the Spirit, not a spiritualized interpretation of a promise for something else. In Lukan tradition then the association of the Spirit with the motif of promise is based on the *prophetic* tradition, and thus the Abrahamic tradition does not come into view.⁴⁶

Secondly, it is noteworthy that in Ephesians 1:13 too the Spirit is connected with promise: 'the Holy Spirit of the promise' (τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῷ ἁγίῳ) with which the believers are sealed in Christ. Interestingly, the word order is reversed, but the idea of 'the Spirit as the content of the promise' is not changed.⁴⁷ Here too, as in Galatians 3:14, the author provides no further explanation; familiarity with the idea is assumed on the readers' side. As such, the prophetic passages seem a better choice than the Abrahamic tradition in which no reference is made to the future bestowal of the Spirit.

Thirdly, there are indications that Paul's understanding of the Spirit is influenced by the prophetic writings. For example, Paul, in the context of defending his ministry, speaks of the Corinthian believers as Christ's letter, written 'through the Spirit of living God' not on stone tablets but tablets of human hearts (ἐν πλαξὶν καρδίαις

⁴⁵ Isaiah 32:15; 44:3; 59:21; Ezekiel 11:9; 36:26; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28-32.

⁴⁶ In Acts 7:17 Stephen identifies the Abrahamic promise as that of the land of Canaan.

⁴⁷ With NRSV; NIV; Moule, *Idiom* (1959) 175; Lincoln, *Ephesians* (1990) 40.

σαρκίνας). This seems to be a clear allusion to the prophetic tradition reflected in such passages as Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:26 (cf. Pr 3:3; 7:3).⁴⁸ This then heightens the probability that when Paul speaks of ‘promise’ in relation to the Spirit, his thought is shaped by the prophetic tradition rather than the Abrahamic one. Thus Fee concludes: ‘it is difficult to escape the conclusion that in Pauline theology when “promise” refers to the Spirit, it also inherently includes the theme of the promised new covenant of Jeremiah by way of Ezekiel, whose purposes are fulfilled by the coming of the Spirit’.⁴⁹ It seems that the concept of ‘the promise of the Spirit’ was so well established among early Christians, including the Pauline churches, that Paul could use it without any fear of misunderstanding even in Galatians where the Abrahamic promise takes up a central place in his argument.⁵⁰

Another option is to take the construction as a genitive of origin or author, which gives the meaning ‘the promise originated from, or mediated by, the Spirit’. Then, the phrase expresses the view that the Spirit is what gives the believers a promise, that is, a hope for the future.⁵¹ As we have seen, Paul, while not making the Spirit as the content of the Abrahamic promise, nevertheless posits a functional parallelism between the two focused on the idea of God’s initiative. In this respect, this interpretation makes good sense in the Galatian context. It also avoids the problematic equation of the Spirit as the content of the promise itself. Nevertheless, the abrupt introduction of the phrase makes it uncertain that Paul is actually intending such a association by this phrase.

⁴⁸ See Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 302-7.

⁴⁹ *Empowering* (1995) 395. With this recognition on the one hand, and with the result that in 3:15-18 the promise does not primarily refer to the spirit on the other (see n. 41), he should have come to the same conclusion as ours. Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 101 is oblivious to the distinction between these two, and mistakenly adduces Acts 2:34 as the evidence for his view.

⁵⁰ So Piage, ‘Holy Spirit’ (1993) 405; Schlier 141; Mußner 235; Thielman, *Law* (1994) 135; Fitzmyer 786: ‘Promise not to Abraham, but to the people of Israel through the prophets’.

⁵¹ This is suggested to me by Dr. D. Campbell through private conversation.

The implication of this interpretation for a proper understanding of Paul's eschatological outlook is considerable. Most scholars take the prevalence of the motif of promise as an indication of the 'promise-fulfilment' perspective with which Paul handles the Galatian crisis.⁵² It means that the real emphasis of Paul's repeated talk of 'promise' lies on its *fulfilled* nature, the decisive fulfillment through the Christ event and, more immediately, through the impartation of the Spirit. For this realized eschatological interpretation Paul's reference to 'the promise of the Spirit' (3:14) provides a seeming exegetical justification.

However, we have demonstrated that this is in fact mistaken. If our interpretation of 'the promise of the Spirit' holds, Paul's talk of the Abrahamic 'promise' should not be related to the Spirit already present in the life of the Gentile believers.⁵³ It means then that we should not assume that the Abrahamic promise discussed in 3:15-29 and 4:21-31 refers to something that has already been realized. Paul's discussion of the 'promise', based on the Abrahamic tradition, should be interpreted on its own, that is, without being mistakenly related to the Spirit. Without making any hasty connection with '(the promise of) the Spirit', we first have to probe carefully the way the motif of promise functions within Paul's argument. Here, in line with our overall subject, our primary concern will be to see whether Paul really presents the Abrahamic promise as fulfilled or not.

5. *The history of the promise*

⁵² This is rightly questioned by Dahl, *Studies* (1977) 121-136.

⁵³ This is an example of what Silva, *Words* (1983) 26 calls 'confusing the word for reality'. Both the Abrahamic promise of the land and the prophetic promise of the Spirit happen to use the same *word* to refer to different *realities*.

Abraham and the promise (3:15-18)

The train of thought in this argument is not easy to follow, because Paul here seems to fuse two distinct lines of reasoning into a single argument: 1) the precedence of the promise, the backbone of the present argument, and 2) Christ as the exclusive seed of Abraham, a point which will serve a crucial role in Paul's later argument (v. 16b).

One gets the impression that talk of the singular 'seed' has been inserted into the middle of an argument for the chronological priority of the promise (vv. 15-16a, vv. 17-18). And once v. 16b is bracketed as a parenthesis,⁵⁴ the logic of the argument becomes straightforward.

In 3:15-18 Paul compares God's promise to the human testamentary principle. The purpose of this analogy is clear: the irrevocability of God's way of dealing with people. A human testament (διαθήκη),⁵⁵ once ratified (κεκυρωμένην), cannot be changed or added to by a later hand. Having stated this principle on the basis of human analogy,⁵⁶ Paul brings in the undeniable fact that God did in fact utter his promise to Abraham and his seed: τῷ δὲ Ἀβραὰμ ἐρρέθησαν αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ (v. 16).⁵⁷ Then, with v. 15 and v. 16a put together, the case is settled. The inevitable conclusion follows with a special emphasis (τοῦτο δὲ λέγω): 'the law, which came four hundred thirty years later, does not annul a covenant previously

⁵⁴ That is, only temporarily, since v. 16b becomes an indispensable presupposition of Paul's thesis of the coming of Christ as the end of slavery under the law in 3:19-29. Cf. Fitzmyer 786. *Contra* Burton 509, who considers v. 16b as a post-Pauline gloss.

⁵⁵ For this see Hanson, *Abraham* (1989) 127; Hester, *Inheritance* (1968) 74. Cf. Morris, *Preaching*, (1965) 91. *Contra* Betz 157 and Schlier 146. Anyway, as Fung 155 notes, the point is not the precise background but the 'inviolability' of the covenant.

⁵⁶ This is an *a minore ad maius*. So Mußner 240; Hartman, 'Gal 3.15-4.11' (1993) 138.

⁵⁷ Though Paul's primary text seems to be Genesis 13:15 (cf. 17:8; 24:7), his appeal to the testamentary custom may well have been motivated by the fact that later in chapter 15 these promises of God, through a solemn ceremony, are 'ratified' as the very first covenant (διαθήκη, Gen. 15:18). The word 'promise' is missing in the OT but nobody would dispute its appropriateness, as Dunn 187 points out.

ratified by God (προκεκυρωμένην ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ!) so as to nullify the promise' (v. 17). From the way Paul formulates the statement his emphasis is this: the promise-covenant was ratified 430 years before the law came (μετὰ τετρακόσια καὶ τριάκοντα ἔτη). Neither is the law the proper way to the inheritance; nor does it make this promise-covenant void (note the repetition of ἀκυροῖ and καταργῆσαι). V. 18 recapitulates precisely the same point: 'If the inheritance was from the law, it would never be from promise' (v. 18a).⁵⁸ Yet, it cannot be, because the Scripture makes it clear that it is δι' ἐπαγγελίας that God showed his grace to Abraham (κεχάρισται, v. 18b).

Our exposition thus far is intended to clarify the thrust of v. 18, which is crucial for understanding the function of the promise language within Paul's argument in vv. 15-18. All too often this verse is interpreted as if it was about how Abraham *received* the promised inheritance, to which v. 18b provides an unequivocal answer of 'through promise'. Then the whole discussion in vv. 15-18 about promise and inheritance operates within the personal history of Abraham: God not only promised inheritance to Abraham (v. 16) but he actually *gave* it to him (v. 18b). Already for Abraham the promise has become a *fulfilled* promise.⁵⁹ In this way Paul's argument, which is designed to press the chronological priority of the promise (vv. 15-16a), has become an argument based on the dynamic of promise and fulfilment exemplified by the life of Abraham (v. 18).

⁵⁸ Dunn 185-7 turns Paul's antithesis of promise and law as a positive remark on the faith-character of the latter: 'what comes after faith (=law) must be consistent with faith'. This certainly enables him to provide a place for the law and 'the election of Israel', but at the cost of Paul's plain logic.

⁵⁹ This is the consensus. E.g., Calvert, 'Abraham' (1993) 4 and more recently, Eckstein, *Verheißung*, (1996) 113, 188-89. Cf. Betz 159-60.

Against this interpretation, however, we have to present the following points. First, if this is the case, Paul is in fact presenting two separate lines of reasoning: 1) the chronological priority of the promise (vv. 16-17), and 2) Abraham's experience of actually receiving the inheritance through promise (v. 18b). He begins with the one and finishes with the other. Though not impossible, this seems a bit inept since if Abraham had already received his promised inheritance, it alone would have been enough to settle the matter, and Paul would not have had to devise such a 'dubious'⁶⁰ chronological argument in the first place.

Secondly, the promise is addressed not only to Abraham but also to his seed, i.e., Christ. That Christ is the co-beneficiary of this promise is repeatedly highlighted (vv. 16, 19). This makes it unlikely that Paul thinks of the promise as already fulfilled within Abraham's lifetime.⁶¹

Thirdly, and most crucially, we should take careful note of the wording in v. 18b. Most translations and commentaries, assuming Abraham's actual reception of the inheritance, take *κεχώρισται* to be transitive with *ἡ κληρονομία* in v. 18a as the omitted but assumed object. Then, with the supply of the supposedly missing *αὐτήν*, the clause translates: 'But God gave *it* (i.e., the inheritance) to Abraham through promise'.⁶² This is not, however, necessarily the best reading of the sentence. Paul's choice of *χαρίζομαι* instead of more straightforward words such as *δίδωμι*⁶³ and the lack of an object should be given their full weight. The verb *χαρίζομαι* can certainly

⁶⁰ Dunn 183, 186; *Theology* (1993) 88, 96-97 brands Paul's chronological logic 'unsatisfactory' and 'dubious', which he thinks is why Paul brings in another ground in 3:18 and drops it in Romans. Blaming Paul, however, does more damage to Dunn himself than to Paul. Cf. Räisänen, *Law* (1983) 43-44.

⁶¹ Cf. Foerster, *TDNT* 3:775.

⁶² So most translations such as NASB, NRSV, RSV, NEB, KJV, JB, NIV. Also Luther and most commentators. Martyn 337 even clarifies this supplied 'it' as 'inheritance'. On this ground Foerster, *TDNT* 3:781 n. 26 says 'possession' instead of 'inheritance'.

⁶³ In 3:22 Paul uses *δίδωμι* but then it is the promise and not the inheritance that is given.

mean 'to give' but it does so only when accompanied by a direct object. Without one it takes on the meaning of 'to show oneself to be gracious to someone', typically with an indirect object of person.⁶⁴ Thus the sentence is better rendered, 'God showed Abraham favour through promise', in the sense that giving the promise was an act of showing his grace, and thereby establishing 'promise' as the only abiding covenant.⁶⁵ Taken this way, the point is not Abraham's reception of the inheritance but God's act of giving Abraham the promise as a demonstration of His grace, which is what Paul means by God 'ratifying' his covenant of promise (vv. 16-17).⁶⁶

Fourthly, it should be noted that the issue of inheritance, explicitly stated only in v.18a but implicitly present from the first, is not posited *vis-à-vis* Abraham. As the antithesis of law and promise makes clear, it is a Galatian question. For Abraham, who lived 430 years earlier than the law, the antithesis between law and promise would have been a simple irrelevance.⁶⁷ Taking up the question how the Galatians are to attain the inheritance, Paul posits two mutually exclusive alternatives before them: promise or law. Then, based on the promise-covenant ratified with Abraham, Paul demonstrates that it comes only through promise. In v. 18 too, as we have shown,

⁶⁴ See *LSJ ad loc.* BAGD 877 allows both possibilities. Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 98 n. 27 and 188, failing to note this syntactical difference, mistakenly insists on 'to give'. While δίδωμι can retain the meaning 'to give' even when the expected object is omitted (1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 9:9), χαρίζομαι always means 'be gracious' which in certain contexts takes on the sense of 'forgive' or 'be gracious' (Lk 7:21; 2 Cor 2:7; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13). Even with a direct object it can retain such meaning (Lk 7:42; 2 Cor 2:10).

⁶⁵ Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 81: 'Dem Abraham aber hat sich durch Verheißung gnädig erwiesen Gott'. He also comments: 'Gott- nachdrücklich an den Schluß gestellt- hat sich ein für einmal für die Verheißung entschieden und Abraham nicht den Gesetzesweg, sondern die Gnade als das Heil geoffenbart'. See also Moltmann, *Hope* (1991) 146; K. Berger, *EDNT* 3:456; Lietzmann 21; Schlier 149; Mußner 242; Hartman, 'Gal 3.15-4.11' (1993) 139; Becker 52; Hays, *Echoes* (1980) 114 ('graced'). Among translations, the German *Einheitsübersetzung* (1979) is a rare exception: 'Gott hat aber durch die Verheißung Abraham Gnade erwiesen.'

⁶⁶ Surprisingly, the connection between vv. 16-17 and v. 18 is all too easily ignored.

⁶⁷ This point is also clearly reflected on the perfect tense of κεχάρισται in v. 18b, which shows the abiding validity of God's act of grace for the Galatian believers. Moule, *Idiom* (1959) 14-5 calls it the 'perfect of allegory'; Bligh, *Greek* (1966) 145-46; Betz 160 n. 62; Mußner 242; Fung 158.

Paul does not appeal to Abraham to determine how the inheritance was *given* to him. The purpose of v. 18b is to bring home to the Galatians' minds the absurdity of v. 18a by *recapitulating* the fact already stated in v.16, that God's dealing with Abraham was 'through promise'. It does not claim that Abraham actually received the inheritance through promise; it only affirms that God has treated him on the basis of promise-grace.⁶⁸ Then in v. 18b Paul is not speaking of Abraham's reception of the inheritance as yet 'another' ground for his argument. Rather, from v. 15 to v. 18 Paul's logic is chronological throughout, for which the early establishment of the promise-covenant with Abraham (v.16), that is, God's dealing with Abraham through promise (v. 18b), is presented as the decisive evidence for the precedence of promise to the later law.

To sum up, Paul makes it crucial for his argument that God gave Abraham his promise(s) nearly 430 years before the law was decreed. On our reading, this is the single point that Paul makes about the promise *vis-à-vis* Abraham. Once v. 18b is properly understood, we realize that the idea of its 'fulfilment' is not in his purview, since his purpose in bringing in Abraham is only to establish the temporal precedence of the promise to the hopelessly 'late' law. Paul points to Abraham as the beginning point of the promise-covenant, and that is all that matters for Paul's argumentative purposes. The dynamic of promise and fulfilment is missing in his interpretation of Abraham story here.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Stephen's opinion in Acts 7:5 that what God 'gave' Abraham 'and to his seed' is not the 'inheritance' itself but 'the promise to give it to him and his seed' coheres nicely with Paul's thought here: καὶ οὐκ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ κληρονομίαν ἐν αὐτῇ οὐδὲ βῆμα ποδός καὶ ἐπηγγείλατο δοῦναι αὐτῷ εἰς κατάσχεσιν αὐτήν καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ.

⁶⁹ Many commentators perceive the eschatological character of Paul's idea of the Abrahamic inheritance. See nn. 4-5 in chapter six.

Christ and the promise (3:16, 19)

We have just shown that in Paul's thought what Abraham received was the promise of inheritance, not the inheritance itself. Does Paul then, as interpreters unanimously uphold, think that this promise was finally fulfilled by Christ?⁷⁰ Concerning the promise itself, how does Christ figure in Paul's argument? Paul does not spend much space discussing this matter, but in a couple of places he explicitly reveals his view of Christ in relation to the promise.

The first statement to look at is, no doubt, 3:16, where Paul identifies the seed of Abraham exclusively as Christ. The problem of Paul's singular interpretation of the collective 'seed' does not concern us here.⁷¹ Whether persuasive or not, Paul's point is clear: the promise was given to Abraham and his 'singular' seed. This seed is, surprisingly, not Isaac but Christ. Then, it follows, it is not only to Abraham but also to Christ that God gave his promise since he gave it to Abraham 'and to his seed' (3:16; Gen 12:3; 18:18; 24:7). In this verse, then, Christ is depicted not as one who *fulfilled* the Abrahamic promise, but as one who *received* it together with Abraham.⁷²

⁷⁰ Theodore of Mopsuestia. Ambrosiaster. Burton 155 appeals to vv. 16 and 29, which do not speak of Christ's 'fulfilling' the promise. Hester, *Inheritance* (1968) 65, 67-8, 77-9, 87, 91-2 acknowledges that Christ is described by Paul as the Heir (62-3), but still keeps speaking of him as 'the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise'. See also Lambrecht, 'Abraham' (1999) 534.

⁷¹ Cf. the charge of Schoeps, *Paul* (1961) 181 n. 3. See Daube, *Rabbinic* (1956) 440-444. Scott, *Christianity* (1961) 154-158 suggests the notion of 'corporate solidarity', taken up by Longenecker, *Exegesis* (1975) 123-124. In view of Paul's emphasis on 'singularity', it is unlikely. Cf. Bruce 172.

Some try to explain this move by assuming that 2 Samuel 7:12-14, in which a singular seed of David is promised, functions as a linkage between Genesis and Paul's christological interpretation. Wilcox, 'Promise' (1979) 2-20; Bruce 173; Dahl, *Studies* (1975) 130-31; Meeks, 'Apocalyptic' (1982) 696; Hays, *Echoes* (1989) 85; Scott, 'Curse' (1993) 219. There is no indication, however, that Paul assumes on the side of his readers the knowledge of this text. The dynamic of the Genesis story itself is sustained by the effort to affirm Isaac being the exclusive and singular seed over against other competitors such as Eleazer and Ishmael. In view of this, Paul's taking the 'seed' in Genesis text to be a singular is not as strange as is often claimed. What is more striking is his identification of this 'seed' with Christ instead of Isaac.

⁷² Hoffmann, *NIDNTT* 3:73. The distorting effect of a prior assumption is most clear in Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 183 who contradicts the plain meaning of the verse by appealing to 3:6-14: 'Er hat nicht wie Abraham selbst den Segen *zugesprochen bekommen* (3.6,9,16,18),

Despite the illuminating silence of the commentators on this very point,⁷³ Paul's meaning cannot be otherwise.

The idea of the Christ as the bearer of the Abrahamic promise implied here is in fact explicitly stated in v. 19, in the context of explaining the *raison d'être* of the law. Since the primary issue here is not Christ but the law, once again, commentators mostly miss the significance of Paul's characterisation of Christ as the recipient of promise.⁷⁴ Having stripped the law of its ability to mediate the inheritance (vv. 15-18), Paul then consolidates his argument by putting the law in its own place: 'Why then the law? It was added because of transgression, till the offspring should come *to whom the promise had been made* (ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ τὸ σπέρμα ᾧ ἐπήγγελται)....' Here Paul's answer is twofold: 1) the law was intended for sin and not for inheritance; 2) it was intended only for a limited time. The *terminus ad quem* of this interim measure is the coming of the seed. The σπέρμα in this verse obviously picks up the talk of the singular σπέρμα in 3:16 identified as Christ: καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ. What is more interesting for our purpose is the seeming aside added to the predicate Christ-seed, ᾧ ἐπήγγελται, meaning '*to whom* the promise has been made'. This is the most probable meaning of the dative in the context in which God utters the promise both to Abraham and his seed Christ: 'Now the promises were made to Abraham and καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ'.⁷⁵ Here then Paul refers back to the very

sondern ihn durch sein stellvertretendes Sterben am Kreuz *verwirklicht* (3,13f.)' (Emphasis his). Patte, *Paul's Faith* (1983) 211-214 speaks of a sort of 'typological' fulfilment.

⁷³ Most commentaries, preoccupied with Paul's exegetical *method*, neglect the *meaning* generated by it. But see Schniewind/Friedrich, *TDNT* 2:583; Fung 156. As Sand, *EDNT* 2:14-15 exemplifies, however, acknowledging this does not prevent them from speaking of Christ as the fulfiller of the promise.

⁷⁴ Part of the reason is, no doubt, the context in which the law, not the promise, is Paul's primary concern. However, it also seems to have to do with the assumption that Christ *must* be the fulfiller of the promise, as Williams, 'Promise' (1988) 710-11 notes.

⁷⁵ Apart from the prior assumption of 'fulfilment', there is nothing in the context to justify the renderings of JNT: 'about whom'; and NIV: 'until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come'. Also Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 198, 225: 'von dem die Verheißung sagt';

‘seed’ who was ‘there’ with Abraham as the co-recipient of God’s promise in 16a, to mark out the end of the law and the beginning or reestablishment of the original promise. Once again, nothing is said about Christ ‘fulfilling’ the promise. Just like Abraham, he comes in as its recipient. As far as we can tell from the text of Galatians, Paul’s idea of Christ as the recipient of the promise is beyond doubt.⁷⁶

Even in the later epistle Romans we see that Paul still maintains basically the same view of Christ in relation to God’s promise. In the fashion observed in Galatians, Paul’s discussion of sonship (8:14-5) leads to the Spirit (8:16), and then to the heirship of believers (8:17): ‘and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (συγκληρονόμοι Χριστοῦ) – if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him’. As the prefixed σύν makes clear,⁷⁷ Christ is not the one who fulfils God’s promise, but one who, as the heir *par excellence*, shares the same promise of God, i.e., the promise of future glorification.⁷⁸ Even at the time of Romans, Paul still holds the same view of Christ as the fellow heir of the Gentile believers, which further supports our reading: *in Galatians, Christ is not the fulfiller of the Abrahamic promise but its original co-recipient.*⁷⁹

Campbell, ‘Coming’ (1999) 8: ‘in relation to whom the promise was made’; Duncan 112; Donaldson, ‘Curse’ (1986) 100; Barclay, *Obeying* (1988) 90: ‘until “the seed” came to inherit the blessing’.

⁷⁶ Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 80 speaks of both Abraham and Christ as ‘Verheißungsträger’.

⁷⁷ In Ephesians 3:6, the same idea of συγκληρονόμοι used to express the equal status of the Gentile believers with the Jewish Christians.

⁷⁸ Conzelmann, *Outline* (1969) 206 notes the ‘eschatological reservation’ in the passage. The attempt of Hammer, ‘Comparison’ (1960) 271 to interpret the αὐτόν in Rom 4:13 christologically to make him ‘the heir’ is falsified by 4:14, where the point is ‘heirs’ in plural. Even granted his rendering, it does not follow that Christ somehow becomes the ‘means to the inheritance’.

⁷⁹ Williams, ‘Promise’ (1988) 710 n. 4 and 718 n. 17. Many acknowledge this point. The puzzle is, however, this observation of Christ the Heir is often, without justification, overridden by Christ the fulfiller of the promise. For example, Schniewind/Friedrich rightly observe, ‘He is the true Heir of the promise, of the universal inheritance, and He determines the fellow-heirs. He who has put on Christ (Gl. 3:27), who is in Christ Jesus (3:28), who belongs to Christ, is the seed of Abraham, κατ’ ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι (3:29)’. Then, somewhat later, citing Rom 15:8, 2 Cor 1:20, and Gal 3:14, they declare that ‘the promises have been fulfilled in Christ’. *TDNT* 3:583-4. Hester, *Inheritance* (1968) describes Christ as

Paul's depiction of Christ as the 'Verheißungsträger' demands that we should not construe Paul's argument of 'promise' from a 'realized eschatological' point of view. 'Promise' serves a very important purpose in Paul's argument, but it does so not as the 'fulfilled' promise but as the promise in the original sense of the word. Of course, claiming that Christ is not the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise, we are not relativizing the eschatological decisiveness of the Christ event. Our point is simply that Paul just does not explain this significance in terms of the fulfilment of the *Abrahamic* promise.

The Galatians and the promise (3:19-22)

In what relation do the Galatian believers then stand to this Abrahamic promise? It clearly remained a promise for Abraham; nowhere in Galatians does Paul say that Christ has fulfilled it. Do we then have any indication in Paul's argument then that it is somehow realized in the life of the Gentile believers, as most interpreters mistakenly infer from 'the promise of the Spirit' in 3:14?⁸⁰ As is clear from vv. 15-18, 21 and 4:21-31, for Paul 'promise' is a conceptual tool employed to highlight the *promissory character* of God's relationship with Abraham in the matters of 'seed' and 'inheritance', namely, his gracious initiative in carrying out his plan with Abraham. Despite the common assumption otherwise, when Paul directly addresses the Galatian

the fulfilment of the promise by incorporating the Gentile believers' justification by faith into the idea of the promise (3:6-9) and extending the promise to include the promise of progeny which, according to him, has been fulfilled in the Gentile believers' becoming the seed of Abraham in Christ (90-1). But the core of the promise is that of the land, that is, of the Kingdom. He cannot say that this promise, too, has already been fulfilled, and he does list it as part of 'not yet' (97-8). He then takes the passage where the notion of 'not yet' is most prominent as the ground for 'already'. Similarly Scott, 'Curse' (1993) 219; Goppelt, *Typos* (1982) 136-40; Hong, 'Misrepresent' (1994) 172-73.

⁸⁰ Lambrecht speaks for many: 'For Abraham that [God's] initiative was still a promise; for the Galatians it has become a reality'. 'Abraham' (1999) 527. Also Dunn 195, 197, 199.

situation, the idea of promise does not come up as prominently as other motifs. This observation, in an indirect way, weakens the assumption of a fulfilled promise.

In vv. 19-25 Paul discusses the two competing principles of law and promise, this time focusing on the nature of the former. Paul states: ἀλλὰ συνέκλεισεν ἡ γραφὴ τὰ πάντα ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν, ἵνα ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ⁸¹ δοθῇ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν. Here the function of the law, now surprisingly called ‘the Scripture’, is described as that of ‘shutting up everything under sin’ instead of ‘giving life’ (cf. 3:21). The purpose⁸² of this arrangement is ‘so that the promise which comes from faith in Christ might be given to those who believe’. The purpose of the law was not to compete with the promise as a way to inheritance/righteousness. On the contrary, it was there in order to enable the promise to stand firm as the only way to this inheritance of righteousness.

This verse is commonly interpreted in the sense that by believing in Christ the believers receive the ‘promise’, namely, ‘what has been promised’.⁸³ For some who connect the passage to 3:14, this statement refers primarily to the reception of the Spirit by the believers at the time of their conversion. Or for others, it means the receiving of the benefits promised to Abraham and now realized in Christ such as justification, sonship, inheritance, etc.⁸⁴ In either case, the emphasis falls on the realized, and therefore now available, character of the promise, and for that matter, on

⁸¹ We take it in the sense of ‘faith in Christ’. Christ’s identity as the genuine ‘seed’ hangs solely on *his being the carrier of God’s promise* as Abraham and not his faithfulness. The question then is how this promise in Christ becomes available for the Gentiles. To this, Paul answers, ‘by faith’. Christ was surely faithful, but it is not the point in Paul’s argument here. *Contra*, Hays, *Faith* (1983) 110-115; Cousar, *Cross* (1990) 119; most recently, D. Campbell, ‘Coming’ (1999). Faith is christological not because it *excludes* any anthropological reference but because this human faith points to Christ. See n. 21 in chapter three.

⁸² Here the conjunction ἵνα can denote either purpose or result, without affecting the flow of Paul’s argument. Cf. Moule, *Idiom* (1959) 142-43.

⁸³ This is the consensus view.

⁸⁴ So Hester, *Inheritance* (1968) 55 (Abraham = beginning; believers = fulfilment).

the crucial significance of the Christ event as the (beginning) point of the fulfilment of God's promise.⁸⁵

On its own, this is a legitimate way of reading the passage.⁸⁶ This runs, however, against the clear thrust of the context in which, as observed above, the motif of fulfilment is conspicuous by its absence. If Christ is clearly described as the recipient of the promise, not its fulfiller, it follows that the believers 'in Christ' also share the same identity as its recipient. It is far better then to take 'giving of the promise' in its normal sense, namely, in the sense of giving the promise itself, not its fulfillment. The believers, ἐκ πίστεως, have become the recipients of the same promise of God.⁸⁷

Once we read the passage in this way, we can see how well it fits into the wider context. In vv. 16 and 19 we have seen that Christ is singled out as the sole recipient of the Abrahamic promise. Now here in v. 22 the Gentile believers, by way of believing him, join the same rank of promise-bearers together with Christ. In fact, this is also the idea expressed in the following context (vv. 23-29). By faith (cf. v. 26), believers are baptized into Christ and thereby clothed with Christ himself (v. 27). In this way, they now belong to Christ (ὁμοῖς Χριστοῦ), the only legitimate seed of Abraham to whom the promise has been made (vv. 16, 19), and therefore they too are also registered as the same seed of Abraham (v. 29).⁸⁸ It means that, on the ground of their faith (διὰ πίστεως) and subsequent inclusion into the σπέρμα proper, the Gentile believers too take on the identity of τοῦ Ἀβραάμ σπέρμα, and therefore

⁸⁵ So Hester, *Inheritance* (1968) 48-50, 67, 78, 119, 123. For Beker, *Paul* (1980) 97-8, since the Abrahamic promise 'has been confirmed and fulfilled in Christ', it is 'no longer the object of hope'. Recently, Eckstein, *Verheißung*, (1996) 210, 212: 'Verheißungsgut' or 'Verheißungsgabe'. Hanson, *Abraham* (1989) 131; Ridderbos 142; Schlier 165; Mußner 254; Martyn 361.

⁸⁶ Cf. Heb 11:13, 33, 39 (Cf. 11:9).

⁸⁷ *Contra* most interpreters. Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 84 seems the least problematic: '... damit die Verheißung aus Glauben, dem einzigen Heilsprinzip, den an Christus Glaubenden zuteil würde'.

⁸⁸ So Fung 117.

carry the same promise together with Abraham and Christ. With God's promise given to them, they now look forward to receiving the promised inheritance: they are κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι (v. 29).

Hence the history of promise from Abraham to Christ, and ultimately to the Galatian believers, is not a story of its eschatological fulfilment but of its succession, the story of *how God's promise continues to find its proper audience, or how God continues to create the heirs to his unchanging promise*. The first successor of this Abrahamic promise is Christ, the only seed to whom God's promises were originally addressed. Then follows those who participate in this rightful seed 'by faith', and are taken up into this history of God's promise. The history of 'promise' still continues, no doubt, until the promise/inheritance is finally given to the promise bearers. Only through this promise, however, in which the Gentile believers participate by their faith in Christ, will they be able to attain to the promised inheritance.

Promise and 'the fullness of time' (4:4)

Along with Paul's reference to the promise of the Spirit in 3:14b, scholars often find the idea of fulfilment⁸⁹ and even the 'new age'⁹⁰ in the interesting phrase, τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου in 4:4.⁹¹ There the phrase, corresponding to ἡ προθεσμία τοῦ πατρὸς in the illustration (v. 3), signifies the time of Christ's coming: 'Then, when the fullness of time came, God sent his son' (v. 4). Here the idea of 'the fullness of time' clearly refers to the arrival of the time God had set to send Christ, and in this sense it certainly delivers the sense of eschatological decisiveness. Within the Galatian

⁸⁹ Vos, *Eschatology* (1930) 26; Ridderbos, *Paul* (1975) 44-49; Hammer, 'Comparison' (1960) 269; Mußner 269; Bruce 194; Kümmel, *Theology* (1973) 144; Cook, 'Prescript' (1992) 517.

⁹⁰ Vos, 'Eschatological' (1912); Schlier 165; Fung 184; Dunn, *Paul* (1998) 420.

⁹¹ This motif finds parallels in other contemporary writings: Eph 1:10; Mark 1:15; Luke 24:24; John 7:8, 30; 2 Baruch 40:4; 70:2-71:1; Tobit 14:5; 4 Ezra 11:44. Also *POxy* 2:275, 24,

context, the coming of ‘the fullness of time’ certainly marks the end of the era of παιδαγωγός and the effective beginning of the time of ‘faith’ and ‘promise’ for the Gentile believers.

We should be careful, however, not to overload Paul’s language. More specifically, it is certainly squeezing the text too much to combine ‘the fullness of time’ with the motif of the Abrahamic ‘promise’ so as to produce the idea of ‘fulfilled promise’ as a concomitant of the advent of Christ. Three observations can be made. First, since the word can mean many different things depending on context, the precise nuance of the phrase should first be determined within the context of 4:1-7. In this particular argument, the phrase corresponds to ἡ προθεσμία τοῦ πατρὸς in v. 3. Since the latter clearly refers to the arrival of the time set beforehand by the father, it is also very probable that this should be the dominant sense of ‘the fullness of time’.⁹²

Secondly, we should note that Paul refers to God sending his son in ‘the fullness of time’ in order to speak of him ‘being under the law’. As is clear from his discussion of the law in 3:19-25, the most crucial point that Paul makes about the law is the ‘no longer’ of slavery: since Christ came, we are no longer under the law; the designated time of the law has now expired. Here too the same concern is present since Paul concludes his argument in this way: ‘therefore, you are no longer slaves but sons!’ (4:7a). At least in the Galatian context, Paul’s interest in time is dominated by his concern to affirm the *termination* of slavery under the law *after* Christ.

Thirdly, and more decisively, this argument is *not* based on the Abrahamic tradition. The analogy is most probably to Greco-Roman testamentary custom.⁹³ Even

MM *ad loc* and SB 3:570; Delling, TDNT 6: 283-311; Schlier 195; Mußner 269 n. 114 (Qumran).

⁹² NEB; JNT: ‘the appointed time’; Lührmann 80.

⁹³ This is the majority view.

if it has a Jewish provenance,⁹⁴ it must be from the Exodus tradition. In other words, here the motif of the (Abrahamic) promise is simply missing. Paul's point here is not incorporation into the community of promise-bearers but the direct adoption by God himself. Instead of the 'seed-heir of Abraham', therefore, the believers are now called 'son-heirs of God'. Of course, Paul's final point is the same (heir), but each time Paul scores this point by taking a different track. It only disrupts Paul's contextual argument to try to read the notion of 'fulfilled promise' into his talk of 'the fullness of time'.⁹⁵

Conclusion

Thus far we have traced Paul's use of the concept of promise in Galatians and demonstrated that, contrary to the widespread assumption, Paul does not use the concept in the sense of a 'fulfilled' promise. Taking Paul's language seriously, we observed that at least in the Galatian context Christ, and therefore believers too, are depicted as the recipients of the Abrahamic promise without any idea of its fulfillment either in Christ or in the believers' lives. This idea of Christ and believers as the promise-bearers fits well with Paul's emphasis on the believers' status as 'heirs according to promise' (3:29; 4:7), a theme we studied in a previous chapter. Motifs such as promise and inheritance have an inherently futuristic logic built into them. Hence Dahl's judgment on the subject seems apropos:

According to Paul, God has shown, by sending Jesus Christ and by his death and resurrection, that he remains faithful to his promises even though men have broken his Law. God has not yet fulfilled his promises,

⁹⁴ See n. 12 in chapter six.

⁹⁵ The lack of the 'fulfilment' motif is perceptively observed by Lührmann 80. But his talk of 'change from the one world to the other' and 'the end of the age of the law and the beginning of the age of faith in the Christ event' too is unfounded. Paul's concern here is not the change of 'the world'; neither does he speak of the change in terms of the change of the 'age'.

but he has confirmed that he will fulfill them. The believers have received a guarantee that they are God's children and coheirs with Christ, but they have not yet taken possession of their inheritance.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Dahl, *Studies* (1977) 136. Despite this sober conclusion, however, he too endorses the consensus that the Spirit represents the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise. Barrett, 'Allegory' (1975) 12 rightly takes 'promise' and 'inheritance' as referring to the future. See also Horbury, 'Land' (1996) 221.

CHAPTER SIX

INHERITANCE AS A FUTURE BLESSING

In chapter four we examined Paul's use of the sonship motif and observed that his affirmation of the Galatians' status as 'seed of Abraham' (3:29) and 'sons of God' (4:7) was designed to bring out their status as God-appointed 'heirs'. We also examined in the last chapter Paul's use of 'promise' and demonstrated the lack of any evidence for the idea of 'fulfilled promise'. Thus there is nothing to prevent us from construing these ideas as pointers to the eschatological future.

What then does Paul mean by 'the inheritance' and the affirmation that the Galatian believers are now 'heirs' (3:29; 4:7)? Speaking of heirship to God's promised inheritance, is Paul thinking of something the Galatians already possess either partially or in full? Or is this inheritance still a promise to be realized in the future? These are the questions that we are concerned with in this chapter.¹ Since much of Paul's argument concerns the crucial motif of inheritance, to which both 'heirship' and 'promise' point,² clarifying its future eschatological character will be a further confirmation of the future eschatological structure of Paul's argument as a whole.

1. The idea of 'realized inheritance'

In the scholarly discussion of the 'inheritance' in Galatians two major approaches can be discerned. First, there are scholars who limit the scope of the 'inheritance' strictly

¹ This is not the question Paul himself is asking in the letter. We raise this issue to question the widespread but problematic assumption of 'realized inheritance'.

² 'It is this concept of the "inheritance" (the content of the promise to Abraham and "to his seed": eternal life), rather than sonship of God, which overarches the whole discussion from

to what has *already* been realized. For them the ‘inheritance’ means ‘the *fully* realized inheritance’. According to this view the edge of Paul’s polemic falls on the very point of ‘already’ and, consequently, the ‘superfluous’ nature of the Galatians’ enthusiasm for another inheritance. By bringing out the fully realized nature of the ‘inheritance’, they argue, Paul intends to demonstrate the sufficiency of faith and the Spirit over against the propaganda of the agitators. Needless to say, the specified ‘inheritance’ refers to the gift of the Spirit, i.e., ‘the promise of the Spirit’ (3:14), which, in turn, converges with other ‘realized’ blessings such as justification, sonship, participation in Christ and freedom from the law. The connotation of the inheritance is rich, but its boundary is strictly confined to what has *already* been realized.³

There are, however, a group of scholars who do recognise the future eschatological nature of inheritance. For them too, without doubt, the inheritance has already been realized and thus is now present, at least in part. In this respect, they too share the consensus that Paul’s emphasis falls most heavily on the point of ‘already’. However, these scholars also acknowledge that ‘inheritance’ intrinsically belongs to the future. In this way, the term inheritance becomes a comprehensive epithet for ‘the

3:15 (implicitly from 3:1) to 5:1 (cf. 5:21)’. Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 189. Similarly, Lührmann 66; Witherington 231.

³ For Burton 225-6 the inheritance means ‘justification, acceptance with God, possession of the Spirit’. The Galatians are heirs ‘as present possessors of the inheritance’, and Paul’s emphasis lies on ‘that which is already possessed’. Betz: ‘all the benefits of God’s work of salvation’ (159), but with the Spirit as ‘the fulfilment of the promise’ (152-3) in mind, what he in fact means is ‘God’s *present* work of salvation’ (160, emphasis added). Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 180, 183, 189, 225 stresses that the dominant idea in the inheritance is the ‘present bestowal of salvation’ (liberation from the curse, justification, the gift of the Spirit and sonship) and not ‘the future consummation of salvation’. Similarly, Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) also places a very strong emphasis on the present reality of salvation (144). For him, the inheritance in Galatians is one of many terms in which Paul conceives of the present ‘life of faith’ (138, 168), and never ‘first fruits’ or ‘down payment’ (74). Cole 103, 111: ‘the actual “enjoyment” of the benefits already promised under the will’. He identifies it with the gift of the Spirit. Martyn 323, 342-3, 392: ‘the church-creating Spirit’ of which the Galatians ‘have been recipients for some time’; Fung 152, 177-8: ‘the reception of the Spirit, justification and sonship’ which are all synonymous; Witherington, 292.

sum total of the eschatological blessings' and 'the whole complex of salvation',⁴ *partially* realized but still to be consummated in its *fullness*. Here the Spirit marks the decisive beginning point in the realization of the inheritance. Thus, for this group of scholars, it is customary to speak of the Spirit as a 'first fruit' and 'down payment' as in Romans 8:14-17, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and Ephesians 1:13-14 (cf. Tit 3:6-7). The result is the well-known eschatological dialectic of 'already and not yet', with inheritance being 'a uniquely appropriate vehicle for conveying the characteristically Pauline dialectic of present and future'.⁵

Whether acknowledging the eschatological aspect or not, they all agree on one point: there is an unmistakable element of 'already' in Paul's idea of 'inheritance', and it is 'the gift of the Spirit' that constitutes the heart of such 'realized inheritance'. Is this, however, a proper reading of Paul's argument? The scholarly vote is virtually unanimous at this point. Without doubt the most crucial evidence for this view of the Spirit as the fulfilment of the promise is 'the promise of the Spirit' in 3:14b.⁶ In the previous chapter, however, we demonstrated that this particular concept does not belong to the Abrahamic tradition that Paul discusses in 3:15 onwards. Without this

⁴ Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 156-7, 160-161, 174-5, 189.

⁵ Furnish, *Ethics* (1968) 126-135 (here 128). For him, the inheritance, means 'salvation' and 'life' in the fullest sense of the word, is in the future and thus still to be awaited. 'An "heir" is, by definition, one who ...waits for the receipt of something which is not yet given'. However, insofar as the heir has 'a new status already', it can be said that the future 'has decisively entered the present'. Thus Paul can identify the 'promise' as 'the promise of the Spirit' (3:14), since the Spirit signifies 'the presence in this age of the power of the age to come'. In this sense, 'the dialectic of present and future finds its focal point in Paul's concept of the Spirit'. For Furnish, this overlapping of the ages constitutes the key to the character of Paul's gospel, providing the eschatological framework of the dialectic 'indicative and imperative', which he considers the essence of Paul's ethics. See also Foerster, *TDNT* 3:782-85; Schlier 150; Hester, *Inheritance* (1968) 41; *idem*, 'Heilsgeschichte' (1967) 118-125; Mußner 276-7; Bruce 191, 251; Hendriksen 140: 'future glory'; Dunn 186, 306-7: 'the inheritance of the Kingdom'; *idem*, *Paul* (1999) 466. (In its outlook the whole section of 'Eschatological tension' resembles Furnish). At one point, Burton 185 does speak of the Spirit as 'earnest', but his actual definition of the inheritance is that of the former group.

⁶ A survey of scholarly interpretation easily shows how much they depend on this single phrase for their view of a realized inheritance. See below.

particular phrase, do we then have any other evidence for the notion of ‘realized inheritance’?

At this point, a general observation seems in order. The word ‘inheritance’ is by definition future-oriented.⁷ Hence the notion of ‘realized inheritance’⁸ is, to say the least, a very difficult, if not self-contradictory, concept. Not only in early Judaism but also in early Christianity as a whole the concept was used only for future eschatological references.⁹ Paul himself also belongs to the same tradition (Rom 4:13-14; 8:17). Even in Ephesians and Colossians, where the motif of ‘realized eschatology’ becomes much more prominent, the word ‘inheritance’ is still reserved for what is yet to come in the future (Eph 1:14, 18; 3:6; 5:5; Col 3:24).¹⁰ The same applies to the Pastorals.¹¹ By positing the ‘realized inheritance’, we are then making the Paul of Galatians a glaring exception within the tradition of early Judaism and early Christianity including Paul himself. This is by no means impossible, but it certainly is unusual, to say the least. Of course, one can posit the idea, but *not* without unequivocal evidence.

⁷ A point frequently acknowledged but all too easily compromised, as in Furnish, *Ethics* (1968) 126-35 and Dunn 186.

⁸ We use this phrase, ‘realized inheritance’, which is not used by other scholars, to refer to the consensus way of interpreting the concept.

⁹ The word ‘to inherit’ is ‘an eschatological technical term in late Jewish literature, implying a share in the coming Kingdom’. See Jeremias, *Promise* (1968) 68. In Synoptics, we have such idiomatic expressions as ‘inheriting the land’; ‘inheriting eternal life’; ‘inheriting the Kingdom’. In Hebrews the motif takes on a special importance. The note of realized inheritance is there but strictly for Christ (1:2, 4) and people in the past such as Noah and Esau (11:7; 12:17). For the letter’s recipients, the inheritance always refers to something in the future (1:14; 6:12, 17-20; 9:15; 11:8). The references in other NT writings also accord with this perspective (1 Pe 1:4; 3:9; Jam 2:5; Rev 21:7).

¹⁰ On this basis, Hammer, ‘Comparison’ (1960) 267-272 asserts that Paul’s concept of ‘(realized) inheritance’ is different from that in Ephesians.

¹¹ In the Pastorals, the motif occurs only once in Titus 3:7. There the eschatological character stands out clearly both by its contrast to the ‘already’ of justification (δικαιωθέντες) and by its

2. A realized inheritance in 4:1-7?

Apart from 3:15-29 and 4:21-31, Paul also discusses the theme of 'heir' in 4:1-7, a passage we did not take up in the last chapter since it does not concern the Abrahamic promise. Do we have here evidence for a realized inheritance? The passage divides into three sections: illustration (λέγω δε, vv.1-2), application (οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς, vv.3-4), and further explication (vv.5-7). Much ink has been spilled to determine the provenance of the illustration (vv.1-2) and the metaphor of 'adoption' (v.5).¹² As Burton states, however, this problem does not really affect the flow of Paul's argument.¹³ The real interpretive problem lies in what is already clear. Regardless of its possible provenance, the illustration clearly describes ὁ κληρονόμος, who is presently a νήπιος, and still ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπους καὶ οἰκονόμους. Nevertheless, being an heir, he is also said to be the κύριος πάντων.

At first glance it seems that Paul compares those before Christ to an 'heir' and 'master' before his coming-of-age. After προθεσμία, he then becomes a full-grown adult who, as κύριος πάντων, finally enters into full possession of his designated inheritance. Then, it seems, the redemption of Christ is likened to a kind of 'spiritual maturity'¹⁴ or 'coming-of-age' after which the child 'heir-master' gains full authority over his inheritance. 4:1-7 then is clearly a case for the 'realized inheritance'. The

combination with the hope of eternal life (κληρονόμοι γεννηθῶμεν κατ' ἐλπίδα ζωῆς αἰωνίου).

¹² There are four major views about the provenance of the imagery. (i) For the Roman law, see Hester, *Inheritance* (1968) 18-9, 59 and *passim*; Lyall, *Slaves* (1984) 67-99; Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 174; Dunn 210; Williams 107. (ii) For a Hellenistic legal background, see Schlier 189; Mußner 266; Moor-Crispin, 'Use' (1989), 203-23; Witherington 281-3. (iii) For a Jewish provenance, see Rossel, 'Adoption' (1952), 233-234; Theron, 'Adoption in the Pauline Corpus' (1956) 6-14; most eloquently Scott, *Adoption* (1992) 121-186, who argues extensively for an 'Exodus typology' in Paul's illustration. (iv) Ridderbos 152 thinks that Paul appeals to the 'a generally current usage' and not any specific legal system. Some remain open on this, e.g., Longenecker 164; Fung 180 n. 59.

¹³ Burton 215.

¹⁴ Fung 179. The quoted phrase is the title he gives to this passage.

‘heir’ at the conclusion must be an heir in possession of the promised inheritance (4:7).¹⁵

Plausible as it may sound, however, this reading overlooks the problem posed by Paul’s illustration. The talk of a ‘child-heir’ and ‘master’ is fine in itself, but surprise sets in when Paul says that this heir is no better than a slave: οὐδὲν διαφέρει δούλου. That Paul at this point ‘overdraws the picture’ is frequently observed,¹⁶ but the problem runs deeper: the picture of an heir-in-slavery is not a mere exaggeration but an outright contradiction in Paul’s own terms. For Paul κληρονόμος is an epithet strictly reserved for ‘those who are in Christ’ (3:26-29), while ‘slavery’ characterises anyone before or outside Christ (5:1, 13), who can never join the rank of the heir (4:21-31). Paul’s clear-cut antithetical thinking in the letter simply does not allow any room for such a hybrid as ‘heir-in-slavery’ (4:7!). Paul seems to be mixing up the oil of heirship and the vinegar of slavery, thereby creating a sheer impossibility. How can anyone be a ‘son’ and ‘heir’ even before τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου? How can such a radical change as υἱοθεσία be likened to mere coming-of-age? By likening the Christian before Christ to an heir, is not Paul contradicting himself?¹⁷

Since Paul’s illustration contains two mutually contradictory notions (heirship vs. slavery), it is very risky to take an interpretive key from the illustration itself.¹⁸ The important thing is to observe how Paul himself develops his argument. Illustration is,

¹⁵ So most interpreters, recently, Dunn, *Paul* (1998) 466.

¹⁶ As Martyn 387 puts it, ‘Focusing his attention on the motif of slavery, Paul overdraws the picture because he anticipates the way in which he will use it’. See also Anderson, *Rhetorical* (1996) 149 (ὑπερβολή); Burton 215; Schlier 188; Eckeret, *Verkündigung* (1971) 89; Betz 203 n. 12; Mußner 267. This partly explains the difficulty of the provenance problem.

¹⁷ Cf. Hester, ‘Heir’ (1967) 121 identifies this as ‘one of the, if not the, most difficult part of the illustration’. This problem has not been sufficiently appreciated. See n. 28 below.

¹⁸ Cousar 93 also notes this but insufficiently.

after all, only an aid and not the main point in an argument. It is the actual point Paul draws from it that should be the key to the meaning of the argument.¹⁹

One possible, and widely held, solution to this problem is to take the illustration as a description of the Jewish Christians before Christ.²⁰ Such a solution, however, falls to the ground by the very fact that 4:1-7 closely follows 3:29 where 'heirs' already includes both Jews and Gentiles. That the heirship becomes real only in Christ, the singular Seed of Abraham (3:17, 29), simply denies the possibility that Paul should designate the Jews before Christ as 'heirs'. From the first Paul is speaking of both Jews and Gentiles.²¹

How then are we to interpret Paul's argument here? Several interesting features in Paul's argument come to our attention. First, Paul's preoccupation with the slavery motif stands out immediately: the heir is ὑπο²² ἐπιτρόπους καὶ οἰκονόμους and οὐδὲν διαφέρει δούλου. As already noted, this is an intentional exaggeration, an

¹⁹ *Contra* Scott, *Adoption* (1992) 126: 'And, in so far as vv. 1-2 compose the "illustration," they hold the hermeneutical key to the whole passage'. Rightly, Longenecker 164: 'Paul, *being more interested in application than precise legal details*, made the specifics of his illustration conform to his purpose. No illustration is required to represent exactly every aspect of a situation in order to be telling or meaningful.' (Emphasis added). See also Martyn 386.

²⁰ According to Dunn 210-223, even though they had been God's elected 'sons' all along, they were in virtual slavery under the control of the guardians and trustees (= the law). Then, on their coming-of-age (προθεσμία, τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου), God sent his Son (4) and redeemed them from this slavery under the law (5a). So far so good, but then the problem sets in. If the Jewish Christians were ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου before Christ, were their condition not the same to that of the Gentiles enslaved by τὰ ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα (4:8)? And what does υἱοθεσία mean (5b)? How can they receive another 'adoption' while already being 'sons'? One may argue that at this point Paul widens the audience, and his subsequent talk of 'adoption', 'receiving the Spirit', 'sonship' and 'heirship' all concern the Gentile Christians too. But Paul keeps speaking of 'we' (5b) without any indication of such change. This way of reading is certainly very handy in maintaining the *Heilsgeschichtliche* continuity, but Paul's logic seems too antithetical for that. Also, with minor variations, Belleville, 'Under Law' (1986) 68; Bruce 193-6; Longenecker 165. Witherington 288-290, to make the picture neater, reads ὑμῖν in v. 5 instead of the more strongly attested and generally accepted ἡμῖν. Scott, *Adoption* (1992) 121-186 differ from these in that he limits the reference to the Jews to vv. 1-2 (Exodus-type) and takes the whole of vv. 3-7 as referring to believers' redemption (New Exodus-antitype).

²¹ Rightly, Burton 215; Schlier 193; Mußner 268; Betz 204; Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 182.

²² As Dunn 211 points out, Paul's use of this preposition is deliberate.

anomaly serving to divulge what Paul is really up to with his talk of ‘child-heir’.

Paul’s conscious focus on ‘slavery’ continues as he moves on to the application (οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς). The term νήπιος remains, but now it is only about slavery: ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου²³ ἡμεθα δεδουλωμένοι (v. 3). The subsequent explication further confirms this intention of Paul’s. The redemption of Christ means the liberation from slavery under the law: τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράση (v. 5a); υἱοθεσία and the resultant sonship is the simple antonym of slavery: ὥστε οὐκέτι εἰ δοῦλος ἀλλὰ υἱός (v. 7a).²⁴

On the other hand, Paul’s ‘neglect’ of other motifs is also unmistakable. Just like the child-heir (vv. 1-2), ‘we’ (v. 3) too were νήπιοι, but this time we are not depicted as ‘heirs’. The motif κύριος πάντων also lacks its counterpart in the otherwise neat parallelism between the illustration and the application.²⁵ It is only natural since in reality the Christians before Christ had never been such a privileged people. Before

²³ See n. 26 in chapter two.

²⁴ So Mußner 268, rightly considers that the emphasis lies on ‘das an den Schluß gestellte, rhythmisch retardierende δεδουλωμένοι’ (268); ‘Der Apostel sagt nicht νήπιος, sondern δοῦλος, wahrscheinlich im Rückblick auf das ἡμεθα δεδουλωμένοι in v. 3’ (276). Also Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 87-90; Schlier 190. Cf. Dunn 210.

²⁵ Much confusion is caused by κύριος πάντων in v. 2. The phrase is usually rendered ‘owner of all’, namely, ‘possessor of all the promised possessions’ (Burton 211; Betz 202; Mußner 267: ‘Besitzer’). There are, however, reasons to question this interpretation. First, it is very unlikely that Paul should intend to say that the Galatian believers are already ‘possessors of all possessions’. However we translate the phrase, the issue is not the prospective inheritance becoming realized. The young heir, though not free enough to dispose it, already possesses and enjoys his inheritance. The only restriction is that he cannot dispose at will. Thus, most scholars end up saying *Verfügungsrecht* as the point of difference between the baby-heir and the mature one. Then, the issue at stake is not so much the ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ of the inheritance as the freedom or sovereignty over it. Even in the illustration itself, then, Paul’s main concern is not the actualisation of the promised inheritance but the change from slavery to freedom.

More importantly, however, Scott has convincingly demonstrated that the whole phrase should be taken as a *Hoheitstitel*. It refers to ‘lord of all’ and not, as most scholars assume, ‘owner of all’. The idea of ‘patrimony is simply not mentioned’. Again, the point is not the ‘possession’ of things, but the condition of ‘sovereignty’ and ‘freedom’, intended to produce a strong contrast to the status of ‘slavery’. Scott, *Adoption* (1992) 130-135. Paul’s sole interest in this passage lies in the notion of freedom-slavery and not of ‘possession’. It runs against the intention of Paul himself to take this phrase as the evidence for the idea of ‘realized inheritance’.

‘the fullness of time’, we are neither ‘heir’ nor ‘master of all’.²⁶ Illustration fails at this point, and therefore Paul simply drops these motifs as he proceeds to the application. Furthermore, while the application describes both before and after ‘the fullness of time’, the illustration stops short before telling the story after προθεσμία. Having made his point about the slavery of the child-heir, Paul immediately moves on to his main story without bothering to return to the unfinished illustration.²⁷ Undue preoccupation with such ‘false’ motifs will thus ruin the flow of Paul’s argument.²⁸

The way Paul develops his arguments makes it clear that his concern is not to discuss the *future* of the child-heir, neither his coming-of-age nor his taking possession of a future inheritance. Starting from the illustration about a child ‘heir-master’, we might expect such a development. Yet, the story he actually tells is not a προθεσμία but υιοθεσία (v. 5a);²⁹ instead of coming of age and taking possession of the inheritance, he has only now become a son and heir: ‘If you are a son, you are also an heir’ (v.7).³⁰ Heirship was the beginning of Paul’s argument; it is also its conclusion.³¹

²⁶ So Mußner 268 (also 271): ‘wir waren in der Zeit der Sklavenschaft eben noch keine “Söhne”, sondern wurden es nach 3, 26 erst in Jesus Christus durch den Glauben’. Martyn 386, puts it more strongly: ‘Paul has no intention of implying that human beings have been God’s sons all along, only waiting for the day of their majority. On the contrary, they have been actual slaves, and have therefore to be made into sons’.

²⁷ So Martyn 389.

²⁸ By and large, scholarly exposition of this passage is quite ambiguous and confusing due to undue emphasis on the illustration and failure to capture Paul’s main point. A good illustration is found in Hester, ‘Heilsgeschichte’ (1967) 118-125. On the one hand, he says that ‘Paul does not say that the heir ceases to be son and heir and becomes lord and owner’ (124). In fact, ‘he does not cease to be a νήπιος’ (122). On the other hand, however, he also states that this heir, once νήπιος, is now given ‘a position of mature responsibility, who is heir and lord of all’ (125). His concern for ‘Heilsgeschichte’ (‘already-not yet’) is clear enough, but we cannot help wondering how these contradictory statements ‘explain’ Paul’s logic. This sort of ambiguity is present in most interpreters.

²⁹ NIV wrongly translates ‘adoption’ virtually in the sense of coming-of-age: ‘we might receive the *full* rights of sons’. (Emphasis added).

³⁰ Here υιοθεσία means adoption, not the state of sonship. Rightly, Scott, *Adoption* (1992) 175-177; Moor-Crispin, ‘Use’ (1989) 214.

³¹ Dunn 210. *Contra* Burton 226-7. See the perceptive discussion in Anderson, *Rhetorical* (1996) 148.

It seems that Paul's initial reference to 'the heir' must be taken in a proleptic sense from the vantage- point of the *present* sonship and heirship – 'when the (now adopted) heir was still in slavery'.³² It is probably the force of what he said at the end of chapter three that prompted him to pick up the word 'heir'. However, since human custom at this point does not really cohere with the redemption in Christ that Paul intends to describe, he has to caricature it to a quite drastic degree.³³ Even then, his use of the illustration is highly selective, dropping those motifs unsuitable for his purpose.³⁴

4:1-7 is not a follow-up of the point presented in 3:15-29 (heirship, 3:29). It is a new argument pressing precisely the same point (heirship, 4:7) from a different angle.³⁵ As we observed in chapter four, in 3:15-29 Paul argues for heirship using the motif of σπέρμα. Now in 4:1-7 he makes the same point with the motif of υἱοθεσία. In 3:15-29 they are heirs because they are 'seed' of Abraham participating in *the* Seed; now they are heirs because they have become 'sons' by the work of *the* Son (4:4) and His Spirit (4:6). The mediation is always through Christ, but he is now the 'Son of

³² The proleptic nature of Paul's reference to 'heir' and 'master of all' is perceived by Burton 211-12, but he still mistakenly construes the picture as that from (initial) sonship to actual possession of inheritance.

Martyn 386 speaks of Paul's 'freedom' to 'reaches beyond the legal picture of vv. 1-2, making adoption a chief motif of vv. 5-7'. It may be true, but then the illustration itself becomes rather meaningless. Paul, who first met the risen Christ as late as on his way to Damascus, could say that God had set him apart for the gospel even before he was born. A similar retrospective perspective seems to be at work here.

³³ Martyn 387: 'a useful metaphor is not an image projected from the (human) known into the (divine) unknown. Things are the other way around. A metaphor true to the gospel is produced by the incursion of the unknown into the orb of what is presumed to be the known'. The situation is comparable to Jesus' parables, in which vivid realism and striking 'distortion' mix together to make the intended effect upon the audience.

³⁴ As pointed out, the heir's being 'master of all' is not part of Paul's actual conclusion. Likewise the motif of 'immaturity' is also left out. Cf. Schlier 190: '[a]uf νήπιος selbst liegt kein Ton'. See also Martyn 389.

³⁵ Longenecker 161; Dunn 210.

God' rather than the 'Seed of Abraham'.³⁶ What Paul affirms is that the Gentile believers are now heirs, either as the seed of Abraham (3:15-29) or as the sons of God (4:1-7). We do not hear anything about the actual possession of the inheritance by this heir. Just as we failed to find any indication of 'realized inheritance' in 3:15-29, here too we do not see any evidence that this is part of Paul's intention.

3. Inheritance and the Spirit

In view of the fact that the Spirit is usually hailed as the content of 'realized inheritance', it is necessary to clarify the relation between the inheritance and the Spirit at this point. Since this decision much depends on the 'eschatological' view of the Spirit as the mark of the new age, we shall deal with this point first, before we examine the data in Galatians.

The Spirit, the new age?

Speaking of Paul's view of the Spirit, scholars frequently claim that for Paul the Spirit signifies the time of fulfilment, the arrival of the longed-for new age.³⁷ Of course, this is not a claim Paul himself makes but an inference scholars make on the basis of the alleged 'intertextuality'. Widely held as it may be, there are good reasons to question the propriety of this logic.

³⁶ This difference is observed by Martyn 306, 392 and *Issues* (1997) 7-24. However, his claim that the 'descent from Abraham' is introduced by 'the Teachers' which Paul replaces with his own 'descent from God' ruins his insight.

³⁷ Schweizer, *TDNT* 6:422; Hamilton, *Holy Spirit* (1957) 31, 39; Hill, *Greek Words* (1967) 269; Ridderbos, *Paul* (1975) 64-68, 87; Silva, 'Eschatological' (1994) 150; Vos, *Pneumatologie* (1973) 87; Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 170; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 383, 385; Marshal, 'Eschatology' (1997) 57.

First, it is widely acknowledged that the Spirit does not feature prominently in the Jewish eschatological speculation of Paul's day.³⁸ This does not render an 'eschatological' view of the Spirit impossible but certainly much less likely. Barclay³⁹ detects the note of eschatological fulfilment in Jubilees 1:23-25, but it is an overinterpretation. While it is true that the passage, building on diverse OT passages (cf. Deut 10:16; 14:1; 31:27; Lev 26:40; Neh 9:2; 2 Chr 6:38; 30:6; Jer 31:9; Hos 1:10), speaks of the revitalization of Israel, the motif of 'new age' is missing. God's creation of 'a holy spirit' certainly means the creation of 'sons of the living God' (v. 25), which is, however, predicated on their 'cleaving to me and to all my commandments' (v. 24) as the result of God 'cutting off the foreskin of the heart' (v. 23). The point of the passage is not the prediction of the new age in the form of the Spirit but the hope of God's decisive intervention perceived as the only solution to the inveterate problem of disobedience (cf. Ode Sol. 11:2). In 1 Enoch 61:11 too, the motif of the spirit occurs in connection with various ethical qualities.

Secondly, to justify this inference therefore scholars typically refer to OT prophecies in which the Spirit is spoken of as a gift of the future (Isa 32:15; 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 11:19; 36:26; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28-32).⁴⁰ For example, Fee claims that '[i]n the light of this kind of intertextuality, one can hardly miss the eschatological implications of Paul's understanding of the Spirit – as fulfillment of God's promised gift of Spirit at the end of the ages'.⁴¹ Fee is overly confident here. While a futuristic

³⁸ Sjöberg, *TDNT* 6:384; Vos, *Pneumatologie* (1973) 51, 63; Isaacs, *Spirit* (1976) 82-84. Contra Davies, *Rabbinic* (1970) 208-26; Hill, *Greek Words* (1967) 232 speak of 'a strong hope for the outpouring of the Spirit in the future' but *without* adequate evidence. Note the warning in Levison, 'Withdraw' (1997) 57 against the danger of manipulating the 'background' data.

³⁹ *Obeying* (1988) 83-85.

⁴⁰ Barclay, *Obeying* (1988) 83-85; Schweitzer, *Mysticism* (1930) 160; Davies, *Rabbinic* (1970) 216-17; Furnish, *Ethics* (1968) 130; Bruce, *Paul* (1977) 207; Dunn, *Theology* (1993) 107.

thrust is visible, the idea of a 'new age' seems the product of proof-texting. As is clear especially in Ezekiel, the main concern of the prophets falls on moral renewal, with 'a new spirit' being synonymous with 'a new heart' (Ezek 36:26; 37:14; 39:29). Thus, for the prophets the Spirit was not so much the sign of the new age as the source of authentic obedience. Assuming Paul's dependence on the OT tradition for his view of the Spirit, it is more likely that Paul seizes on the main motif of moral transformation without necessarily claiming the presence of the new age.⁴² That the Spirit *ipso facto* signifies the new age is by no means an obvious inference from these passages.

Thirdly, we have to pay serious attention to the fact that in Galatians Paul *never* makes a statement to such an effect. To be sure, it is not impossible that this idea is so manifest as to obviate any reference to it, but it is extremely unlikely. If this realized eschatological concern is, as scholars usually assume, central to Paul's thought, his silence on the point is striking, especially in view of his extensive discussion of the Spirit. Moreover, granted such an implication as *one* aspect of the Spirit, it still remains that the Spirit also means many other things. Mere references to the experience of the Spirit, therefore, would not have helped the Galatians to detect which possible aspect Paul actually means; if he had really intended the 'new age', he would have said so explicitly, which he fails to do in any of his letters. It is too risky a procedure to construe Paul's argument based on an inference which may or may not be the case.

For Paul the Spirit is most of all a living reality, the presence of the risen Christ himself, through whom his work in the past becomes an ever-relevant reality for

⁴¹ Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 304. He comments on 2 Corinthians 3:6, which he also applies to Galatians.

⁴² In early Christian thinking Paul is prominent by his emphasis on the ethical role of the Spirit. Bultmann, *Theology* (1951) 336; Davies, *Rabbinic* (1970) 177, 220-21; Hill, *Greek Words* (1967) 275; Isaacs, *Spirit* (1976) 87.

believers in the present (3:1; cf. 2:19; 6:14). It is not a mere theological shorthand for the 'new age'. Paul's emphasis on the Spirit is therefore not so much a gesture of alleged intertextuality as an act of reminding his converts of the very foundation of their Christian existence⁴³ with a view to showing what ultimately matters and what is at stake in their pursuit of the hope of righteousness. More will be said on this in the final chapter.

The Spirit in Galatians

The final judge of the matter is, of course, the data in Galatians itself. Within Galatians the only possible evidence for this view is the phrase 'the promise of the Spirit' (3:14b), but we have already seen that it cannot be interpreted in this way. The real question is whether the way in which Paul speaks of the Spirit throughout the letter compels us to accept the 'novel' idea that it means the realization of God's promised inheritance.⁴⁴ The answer is definitely in the negative.

First, as is clear from the way Paul argues, it is by no means self-evident to the Galatians that the inheritance comes through promise and not by the law. Paul has to *argue* for the point, just as he has to prove that justification is by faith (2:15-21). Things are different, however, when it comes to the Spirit. For Paul, the Galatian believers' reception of the Spirit belongs to a historical fact. Precisely because this fact is so obvious, Paul can build his case on it by throwing a rhetorical demand at the 'foolish' Galatians: 'Have you received the Spirit by hearing of faith or by works of the Law?' (3:2, 5). If the 'inheritance' refers to the Spirit, however, it then means that

⁴³ This is noted by Betz, 'Spirit' (1974) 146; Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 42; Fee, 'Conversion' (1997) 175.

⁴⁴ Dahl, *Studies* (1977) 133 ('evidentiary proof'); Betz 25, 28-29; Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 39, 42-43; Barclay, *Obeying* (1988) 84-5; Dunn, *Theology* (1993) 60; Williams 84-85; *idem*, 'Justification' (1987) 91-100.

Paul now argues (3:15-18) for what he had previously assumed to be obvious (3:2-5)! Hence inheritance, which Paul argues to be by promise, must be something other than the Spirit, which even the 'foolish' Galatians know to have come by faith.⁴⁵

Secondly, as we pointed out in the last chapter, in 3:15-29, where Paul deals with the dual themes of promise and inheritance extensively, the Spirit does not come into Paul's argument, at least not explicitly. If the inheritance actually refers to the Spirit, this failure to make an explicit connection between the two also becomes very difficult to explain. If Paul had had the Spirit in mind throughout the argument, would he not have made this clearer?

Thirdly, the role of the Spirit in relation to the inheritance also points in a rather different direction. In 4:6, after speaking of God 'sending the Spirit of his Son' to the newly adopted sons, he affirms their heirship on the basis of this sonship (4:7). Here the Spirit either identifies or institutes⁴⁶ the Gentile believers as God's sons. In the context the primary function of the Spirit, specified as the Spirit 'of His Son',⁴⁷ is to ensure an effective bond between the 'Son' and the 'sons', and *not* to identify the content of the inheritance.⁴⁸ If Paul meant the Spirit by the 'inheritance', Paul's argument, especially his conclusion in v. 7, becomes very awkward. He would then be saying in effect: 'If you are a son, then you are also the one who possess the

⁴⁵ Scholars who associate the Spirit with the inheritance fail to notice this problem.

⁴⁶ The precise meaning of ὅτι in v. 6 is debated. It may either be causal ('since') or explicative ('that'). For recent discussion see Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 406-8. Paul himself does not seem interested in making such distinction. Rightly, Dunn 219.

⁴⁷ That the addition of 'of His Son' is intentional is frequently noted. E.g., Burton 222-3; Schlier 198; Mußner 275; Longenecker 173-4; Dunn 220; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 404-6. Since the Spirit concerns sonship, they should have reconsidered their identification of the Spirit with the inheritance.

⁴⁸ *Contra* Moore-Crispin, 'Galatians 4:1-9' (1989) 219 and many others.

inheritance of the Spirit,' as if their possession of the Spirit needs an argument! It would be a most inept truism that practically ruins the force of his argument.⁴⁹

This becomes even clearer in 4:21-31. Here the backbone of the argument is the clear-cut antithesis between ὁ κατὰ πνεῦμα and ὁ κατὰ σάρκα. Paul cannot be clearer: the latter is absolutely denied any possibility of inheritance (4:30); it is only ὁ κατὰ πνεῦμα that is guaranteed the promised inheritance. Here the Spirit 'qualifies' the child as the rightful heir and thus 'guarantees' him the prospect of the promised inheritance, and therefore, in its function, corresponds to the 'promise' in the case of Isaac's birth. Just as God's promise established Isaac as a God-designated heir, it is now the work of the Spirit that puts the Gentile believers on the same rank of heir.⁵⁰ The Spirit *enables* believers to receive the inheritance; it never is its content.

Fourthly, perhaps one may argue that Paul intends to correct the Galatians' futuristic concept of 'inheritance' by defining as the Spirit they have *already* received as though he was saying, 'Look, the Spirit that you have received by faith, that is the very inheritance that you are looking for!'⁵¹ Yet, nowhere in the letter do we find indications that Paul is at pains to make this point. The only possible instance of such a move is, once again, 'the promise of the Spirit' in 3:14b, but even there the connection between the 'promise' and 'the Spirit' is more assumed than argued for. Paul's arguments seem to have been designed for a different purpose.

Lastly, in a later part of the letter too, Paul's view of the Spirit remains the same. It is 'through the Spirit', Paul affirms, that the Christians are to wait for the hope of

⁴⁹ Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 396, while sensing this awkwardness, still asserts that the inheritance means 'becoming God's children in the new aeon' and 'the inclusion of Gentiles among God's children'. Then he complains that 'Paul's fluid use of metaphor causes the argument to become a bit fuzzy at the end'. This alleged ambiguity is in fact caused by the discrepancy between Paul's 'future' inheritance and Fee's own 'realized' one.

⁵⁰ See 5.3 above.

⁵¹ Witherington 292. This point is necessarily implied by the identification of the inheritance with the Spirit.

righteousness (5:5). The fruit of the Spirit is an absolute 'prerequisite' for entering the future Kingdom of God (5:19-24). It is only by sowing for the Spirit that one can reap the harvest of eternal life 'from the Spirit' (6:7-9). If the Spirit is equated with the inheritance, all these statements fail to make any sense.

In sum, in Galatians the Spirit is not the content of the 'realized inheritance'. In all the passages discussed above the Spirit is mentioned in the light of the future: the hope of righteousness, the Kingdom of God or eternal life.⁵² In this letter, the Spirit is never identified as (part of) the inheritance; it is always the *means* to or *condition* of the God-promised inheritance.⁵³ It is simply wrong to draw the notion of 'realized inheritance' from Paul's description of the Spirit.

4. *Inheritance in context*

Since the motif of 'promise/inheritance' originates from the Abrahamic story in Genesis, it is clear that Paul cannot discuss the subject apart from that tradition. God promised to Abraham that he would give him and his descendants 'the Land' as their inheritance. Therefore, 'promise/inheritance' is originally an Abrahamic question.

On the other hand, however, Paul also considers the issue to be crucial for the Galatian believers, as is clear from his affirmation that the 'inheritance' does not come 'by the law' but 'through promise'. So he endeavors to affirm that not only Abraham but also the Galatian believers are 'heirs according to promise' (3:29). That Paul's interest in the 'inheritance' goes beyond the Abrahamic tradition is most clear in 4:1-7 where he discusses the 'inheritance' without referring to the Abrahamic

⁵² Observe the unequivocally future eschatological thrust of 5:16-26 and 6:7-9. As already seen, even the reminder in 3:1-5 is couched in a future eschatological perspective ('beginning and ending'). See chapter two. The assertion of Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 144 that 'the Spirit does not point to the future fulfilment' is simply not true.

⁵³ Typically, the simple dative πνεύματι (3:3; 5:5; 5:16, 18, 25) or κατὰ πνεῦμα (4:29) is used.

tradition. Not only are the Galatians heirs ‘according to promise’; they are also heirs ‘through God’ (4:7).

The dual orientation of the ‘promise/inheritance’ (Abraham and the Galatians) provides an interesting feature in Paul’s discussion of the subject. Anchored in God’s promise to Abraham, the association of the ‘promise/inheritance’ with ‘the Land’ never disappears from its purview,⁵⁴ and the ‘promissory’ character of God’s way of dealing with Abraham continues to remain normative for its proper understanding (3:18).⁵⁵ Since the Galatian believers live in a different time and space, the promised ‘inheritance’ necessarily takes on a very different meaning. The promise remains effective, but ‘the Land’ is now transformed into a Christian hope.

There is, then, both continuity and discontinuity in Paul’s conception of the Abrahamic ‘promise-inheritance’. This point will become very important as we try to determine the precise meaning of the promised ‘inheritance’. In what sense is the Abrahamic ‘promise-inheritance’ still relevant to the Gentile believers? Within the Galatian context, what does the ‘inheritance’ ultimately refer to? How would Paul, a first-century Jew now committed to the risen Christ, have understood the meaning of the Abrahamic promise of the Land?

Whether introduced by Paul himself or by the agitators, it seems almost certain that the inheritance the Galatians know of is a future eschatological one, a point suggested by the futuristic understanding of ‘inheritance’ in early Judaism and early Christianity in general. Especially in early Judaism, the expectation of a future inheritance is closely related to the strong emphasis on the necessity of keeping the law as the means of receiving this future inheritance. If the concept is from the

⁵⁴ See n. 32 in chapter five.

⁵⁵ The perfect force of *κεχάρισται* in 3:18 is frequently noted. See n. 70 in chapter five.

agitators,⁵⁶ they have probably taught the Galatians that they will participate in the promised inheritance only by performing works of the law.⁵⁷

Under such circumstances Paul's silence on the 'what' or 'when' of the inheritance serves as an eloquent testimony to the fact that he was not at odds with them at least on these points. His discussion of the subject is extensive, but the only 'correction' he makes to the traditional teaching is that the inheritance is not 'by law' but 'by promise' and 'through the Spirit'. Paul's concern is sharply focused on a single point: the inheritance comes 'through promise' (3:18, 23, 29); the Gentile believers are now its heirs 'through promise' (3:29; 4:7, 21-31). He simply assumes that everybody knows what the inheritance refers to and the most natural inference from this is that all the parties involved in the Galatian crisis are in full agreement with its future eschatological character.⁵⁸ This contextual consideration also makes the assumption of 'realized inheritance' quite difficult to maintain.⁵⁹

5. *Inheritance and the Kingdom of God*

This leads us to the crucial passage in 5:21 where Paul associates the 'inheritance' with the 'Kingdom of God': ἃ προλέγω ὑμῖν, καθὼς προεῖπον ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν (5:21b). This stern *Drohwort*

⁵⁶ For the possibility that the concept is introduced by Paul himself, see our discussion of 5:21 below.

⁵⁷ A survey of early Christian writings tells us that one's commitment to Jesus did not necessarily involve a radical change in their eschatological outlook.

⁵⁸ We also presented a similar argument for 'justification'. See chapter 3. Scholarly failure to notice this fairly obvious point well illustrates the danger of 'historical reconstruction' approach which makes Paul argue for something about which he is actually silent.

⁵⁹ Marius Victorinus: inheritance = 'receiving eternal life'. (Edward 50). On this Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 160 comments: 'But the sudden introduction of κληρονομία in v. 18 shows that Paul, in line with the intertestamental Jewish tradition understands the 'Land' promise in an eschatological sense: the "inheritance" awaiting Israel in the last age'. This is closer to the direction in which we are heading. Nevertheless, he takes this inheritance also as a realized one, mainly in the form of the Spirit (156, 163).

(Haufe), an integral part of Paul's apostolic message,⁶⁰ follows a long vice-list describing various symptoms of 'works of flesh' (5:10-20a). Paul's point is clear enough: if one is led by the Flesh and thereby produces evil behaviour, one will be excluded from the eschatological inheritance of the Kingdom of God.

Assuming that Paul's argument in chapters three and four concerns 'realized inheritance', scholars frequently read this explicitly futuristic passage in the light of the eschatological 'tension' of the 'already and not yet', with the Spirit understood as the 'first fruits' and 'down payment' of the final Kingdom yet to be consummated.⁶¹ That the idea of 'already' is the result of a mistaken exegesis has already been made clear. Even granted the assumption, however, this involves a dubious procedure. As we noted in our discussion of 5:5 in chapter three, to conflate the assumed notion of 'already' with the clearly futuristic thrust of Paul's statements here constitutes the well-known fallacy of 'illegitimate totality transfer'. The 'already and not yet' may be a legitimate scheme for a systematic synthesis of the diverse aspects of Paul's eschatological thinking, but it in no way means that we can impose this synthetic notion on each statement smoothing out its specific contextual edges. In this particular context, Paul's manifest intention is to warn the Galatians that improper conduct in the community will certainly disqualify one for the future Kingdom. The notion of 'already' at this point ruins the effect Paul wants to produce with this stern *Drohwort*.

Interpreters also frequently obscure the explicit eschatological thrust by rendering βασιλεία θεοῦ as 'realm of God' or 'dominion of God'.⁶² That this will not do has

⁶⁰ 'As I have warned you before' refers to his previous teaching activity among the Galatians. As most scholars agree, this was a staple component in his apostolic preaching among the Gentiles. Betz 284-5; Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 35-6; Williams 22-3; Mußner 383; Bruce 251; Longenecker 258; Dunn 306; Martyn 497-8. Lightfoot 25 212 speculates that Paul uttered this warning on his second visit to Galatia.

⁶¹ Dunn 307; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 443. Cf. Bruce 251.

⁶² Duncan 173; Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 175-6; Fung 261-2; Witherington 406-7. As Martyn 497 points out, Paul's use of προλέγω ('warn ahead of time') anticipates the day of Judgment.

been clearly demonstrated by Kvalbein.⁶³ The motif of ‘inheriting’ or ‘entering’ with which the ‘Kingdom of God’ is typically combined in Synoptics and Paul, renders the idea of ‘dominion’ quite unlikely. Both for Jesus and Paul the kingdom of God refers to the ‘eschatological inheritance, the content of all the awaited gifts of salvation’.⁶⁴

The importance of Paul’s ‘Kingdom of God’ statement for a proper understanding of Paul’s concept of ‘inheritance’ is obvious. By connecting the motif of the Abrahamic inheritance with the future Kingdom of God, Paul makes a clearly future eschatological definition of the former. The conclusion is, then, quite simple: with his talk of the ‘inheritance’ in Galatians Paul most probably means the eschatological salvation, namely, the Kingdom of God (5:21) and eternal life (6:7-9) as he specifies later in the letter. On the one hand, the figure of Abraham remains determinative since the hope of eschatological salvation is so closely associated with God’s promise to Abraham. On the other hand, it is now a Galatian question, since this ancient promise of the land is now understood to be the promise of the eschatological land for them, i.e., the future Kingdom of God and eternal life.

Explicitly or implicitly,⁶⁵ however, it has been asserted that this particular statement should be separated from Paul’s earlier discussion of ‘inheritance’. Two grounds are normally given.

⁶³ ‘Kingdom of God’ (1997) 60-84 (esp. 64-71). Kvalbein refers to G. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus* (1902) who observed the syntactical difference between *malkuth/malkutha* and βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ which corresponds not to the former but to such motifs as ‘coming aeon’, ‘the coming world’ or ‘life in the world to come’. See M. Sanh. 10.1-4; Pirke Aboth 3:16. Luz, *EDNT* 1:204: ‘As the use of εἰσερχεσθαι indicates, the idea of an “area” is present in the word βασιλεία, not the functional notion of sovereignty’. Also Goulder, ‘Already?’ (1994) 30 n. 32; Hester, *Inheritance* (1968) viii. Cf. Moore, *Judaism* (1927) 94-95.

⁶⁴ Merk, *Handeln* (1968) 73-4. See also Martyn 497. The similar warning in 1QS 4:12-14 is often cited (Martyn; Mußner).

⁶⁵ That is, by ignoring the ‘inheritance’ motif in this passage. This seems to be a majority way of resolving the alleged ‘tension’. Some focus on the Kingdom motif, while others ignore the passage completely (e.g., Williams).

First, it has been asserted that the future eschatological use of κληρονομεῖν stands at variance with Paul's earlier use of the term for a realized inheritance.⁶⁶ This is clearly begging the question, however, since, as we have shown, Paul's discussion in 3:15-4:21 by no means requires the meaning of 'realized inheritance'. The evidence available rather points in the opposite direction.

Secondly, many have argued that the statement, originating from the early Christian (baptismal) catechism, contains ideas which are 'not quite Pauline', and therefore, 'in some tension with Paul's theology'.⁶⁷ But a charge of this kind is usually precarious, and this one seems to be no exception. That βασιλεία θεοῦ is 'somewhat rare' in Paul is a matter of personal opinion; one can equally say that fifteen occurrences in the whole Pauline corpus is by no means meagre, especially compared with other letters in the New Testament.⁶⁸ More importantly, the idea of '(not) inheriting the Kingdom of God' is an integral part of Paul's apostolic preaching, and this flies in the face of such an argument.⁶⁹ The assertion that οἱ πράσσοντες is at variance with Paul's normal usage also does not carry any weight.⁷⁰ Nothing in this statement prevents us from making a fruitful connection between Paul's discussion of

⁶⁶ Betz 285; Donfried, 'Kingdom' (1987) 185; Longenecker 258. Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 189 similarly asserts that the statement in 5:21, which is more in line with Rom 4:13, is different from the inheritance in Galatians 3-4 which stresses the present bestowal of salvation. Without explanation Schnackenburg, *Kingdom*, (1963) 285 also asserts that in chapters three and four Paul does not associate the inheritance with the Kingdom of God.

⁶⁷ Gager, 'End-time' (1970) 325-37 (333); Betz 285; Donfried, 'Kingdom' (1987) 185; Longenecker 258.

⁶⁸ 1 Thess 2:10-12; 2 Thess 1:5; Gal 5:21; 1 Cor 4:20; 6:9, 10; 15:24, 50; Rom 14:17; Eph 5:5; Col 1:13; 4:11; 2 Tim 4:1, 18. Cf. Heb 1:8; 2 Pet 1:11.

⁶⁹ See n. 59 above. In two places the statement is introduced by a reminding formula or another: 'I warn you in advance, as I did so before' (Gal 5:21); 'Do you not know' (1 Cor 6:9). We should not think that it was only part of Paul's 'missionary' (initial) preaching, distinguishing it from Paul's preaching in general. See Furnish, *Ethics* (1968) 98-111. Paul presupposes familiarity with the thought on the side of his Gentile readers. Would anyone have preached an idea so actively which is not quite harmonious with one's own thought?

⁷⁰ As Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 443 points out, the word ποιέω is more traditional since it is brought in as the result of Paul's citation of Lev 18:5 in 3:12.

the Abrahamic inheritance in chapters three and four and the motif of ‘inheriting the Kingdom of God’ and ‘eternal life’.

There are, in fact, many positive grounds for reading the two concepts in close connection. First, there is a potential problem in Paul’s logic that can be avoided. Galatians, by common agreement, is the most polemical and emotionally charged among Paul’s writings. Considering the high stakes (apostasy), this is hardly surprising. So Paul is at great pains to refute the destructive claim of the law-upholding agitators and to reaffirm the truth of ‘by faith’, ‘through promise’, and ‘through the Spirit’. According to the majority view, it is the notion of a ‘realized inheritance’ as defined in terms of the Spirit that plays a critical role in sustaining his case. If that is the case, however, his explicitly future eschatological use of ‘inheritance’ in such a stern ‘eschatological warning’ (5:21b; 6:7-9) deals a fatal blow to the very point he has been trying to establish.⁷¹ Paul has run the whole gamut of argument to prove the ‘already’ of the inheritance; now the Galatians hear that this is not the case at all. Given such high stakes in Galatia, this is the last thing Paul would dare to do. The critical nature of the crisis demands a single, consistent perspective throughout the letter.⁷² Since Paul is explicitly eschatological in the later part of the letter, it is more probable to suppose that his earlier argument about ‘inheritance’ should also be structured in the same future eschatological perspective.

Secondly, Paul has already taught (προεῖπον) the Galatians about ‘inheriting the Kingdom’ and therefore presupposes familiarity with the concept on their part;⁷³ the only ‘inheritance’ they presently know of is that of the eschatological Kingdom of

⁷¹ On a realized eschatological reading, even speaking of ‘tension’ is an unjustified understatement.

⁷² Or, is Lightfoot’s (63) confident judgement that ‘The Epistle to the Galatians is especially distinguished among St Paul’s letters by its unity of purpose’ still wishful thinking?

⁷³ So Bruce 251.

God (5:21). If so, it is very probable that the Galatians, without an explicit indication otherwise, associate Paul's talk of the Abrahamic 'inheritance' with the inheritance they are waiting for, namely, the 'Kingdom of God' and 'eternal life'. To these people, then, Paul's belated reference to '(not) inheriting the Kingdom of God' probably serves as a natural confirmation of their understanding of Paul's argument.

Thirdly, the close linguistic link between οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν in this verse and the similar phrase in 4:30 has to be considered: οὐ γὰρ μὴ κληρονομήσει ὁ υἱὸς τῆς παιδίσκης μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἐλευθέρως. Already in this text inheritance is in the future, promised to those who are born of the free woman, namely, of the Spirit (4:23, 28-29, 31). Here the negative pronouncement of 'will never inherit' applies to 'the son of the slave woman', namely, the son born κατὰ σάρκα (4:23, 29). Similarly in 5:21 the warning is addressed to those who walk 'by the flesh' (σαρκί) and practice τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός (5:16-21a), involving the promise that those who walk according to the Spirit bearing its fruit will surely inherit the Kingdom of God. The similarity both in the Spirit-flesh antithesis and their actual wording suggests the close association of the two statements.⁷⁴

Fourthly, from the tradition-historical perspective, the idea of 'inheriting the Kingdom of God' or 'inheriting eternal life' (cf. 6:7-9), corresponding to the Jewish idea of 'the age to come' and 'life in the new aeon', has its origin in the same Abrahamic promise of the land. Space precludes detailed exposition, but a survey of inter-testamental literature easily shows that the idea of 'inheriting the new aeon' and similar motifs are firmly rooted in the promise of the land given to Abraham and to

⁷⁴ This is especially so if we remember the aural nature of ancient 'reading'. Cf. Stanton, 'Law' (1996) 100-101; Harvey, *Listening* (1998), especially chapter 8 on Galatians.

his children.⁷⁵ To be sure, Furnish, like many others, contends that Paul derives the idea of 'inheritance' in 3:15 onward directly from the Abrahamic tradition, while the idea of 'inheriting the Kingdom of God' is taken from the early Christian tradition.⁷⁶ But even if we grant this probably unlikely assumption,⁷⁷ it does not entail much, unless one also claims that Paul is unaware of the motif's tradition-historical origin in the Abrahamic tradition, which is falsified by Paul's own, future eschatological understanding of the Abrahamic promise in Romans (4:13). That is, it is very unlikely that when Paul speaks of 'inheriting the Kingdom of God', an idea ultimately founded on God's 'promise of the land', he intends something quite different from the Abrahamic 'inheritance' (of the land) to which he has already referred (3:15-29; 4:21-31).⁷⁸ Apart from the question-begging assumption of a 'realized inheritance', there is nothing that prevents us from relating the idea of 'inheriting the Kingdom of God' to Paul's discussion of the Abrahamic 'inheritance'. Paul's discussion of the Abrahamic inheritance in Galatians chapters three and four and his talk of the 'inheriting the Kingdom of God' belong together. In both places, the 'inheritance' refers to the future inheritance of eschatological salvation.

By the same token, it also seems certain that the reference to 'reaping eternal life' in 6:7-9 should be included within the notion of the inheritance. Both are set within

⁷⁵ See, e.g., Ps. Sol. 14:10; 1 Enoch 40:9; 4 Macc 18:3; Test. Job 18:6-7; 47:1; 2 Baruch 44:13; 4 Ezra 7:96; Slov. Enoch 9:1; 10:4-6; 66:6. Also see Friedrich, *EDNT* 2:298; Schweitzer, *Mysticism* (1930) 210; Kvalbein, 'Kingdom of God' (1997) 68; Hester, *Inheritance* (1968) 29-36, 79; Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 68-70. Gager, 'End-time' (1970) suggests its origin in 'a common rabbinic *topos*' present 'in discussions about heretics' (333) which is, of course, rooted in the Abrahamic promise of the land.

⁷⁶ Furnish, *Ethics* (1968) 127; Vos, *Pneumatologie* (1973) 30 (26 n.1); Haufe, 'Gottes Reich' (1985) 467-72; Betz 285; Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982) 164-70; Donfried, 'Kingdom' (1987) 185; Longenecker 258; Martyn 498; Duling, 'Kingdom' *ABD* 4:65-66.

⁷⁷ The precise phrase, 'inheriting the Kingdom of God' is very rare (Mt 25:34). *Did* 7.1 and *Herm. Sim* 9.16.2-4, passages that Betz adduces as evidence are hardly close enough to prove the claim.

⁷⁸ In Justin we have the connection between 'Abraham's seed according to flesh' and 'eternal kingdom'. *Dial* 140.

the same framework of the Spirit-flesh antithesis with the same purpose of eschatological warning. Moreover, a comparison of this passage with other passages such as Rom 2:7 and 1 Corinthians 15:50 makes it clear that in Paul's thought the eschatological Kingdom practically converges with such ideas as 'eternal life', 'the imperishable' and 'glory'. All are various expressions of the same reality of future eschatological salvation.⁷⁹

An important conclusion has been drawn: the Kingdom of God-eternal life is the 'inheritance' that Paul has been discussing throughout the letter. This means that from the first Paul's discussion of the 'promise/inheritance' is structured from a consistently future eschatological perspective. Paul's strong emphasis on the 'heirship' of the Gentile believers and his repeated claim that the 'inheritance' is only 'through promise' and 'by the Spirit' are therefore *not* retrospective thoughts looking back on what has already transpired and is now present. On the contrary, by his repeated talk of 'heir' and 'inheritance', Paul repeatedly draws the Galatians' attention to what still lies in the future. Pointing to the eschatological future, Paul's consistent claim in the letter is that the Galatians will be able to attain the 'inheritance' (eschatological salvation) only by holding on to faith and by being led by the Spirit.⁸⁰

6. Inheritance and justification

Having identified the 'inheritance' as final salvation (the Kingdom of God and eternal life), we are now faced with an important question: how does this inheritance relate to

⁷⁹ Rightly, Friedrich, *EDNT* 2:279.

⁸⁰ In 2 Clement 5:5, without referring to the Abrahamic tradition, 'the rest of the coming kingdom and eternal life' (ἀνάπαυσις τῆς μελλούσης βασιλείας καὶ ζωῆς αἰωνίου) is called 'the promise of Christ' (ἡ ἐπαγγελία τοῦ Χριστοῦ).

the hope of righteousness, the central concern of the letter? The answer is not far away. Earlier in our study we argued that justification/righteousness in Galatians is depicted as an exclusively future eschatological gift.⁸¹ Then, in the preceding and the present chapters, we demonstrated that the ‘promise-inheritance’, identified as the ‘Kingdom of God’ (5:21) and ‘eternal life’ (6:7-9), also point to the same future of eschatological salvation. The implication is clear: justification and inheritance, both being future eschatological, are just another way of referring to the same reality of final salvation. The hope of righteousness is not different from the hope of the future Kingdom of God and of eternal life.⁸²

Paul’s actual treatment of these two themes as functional synonyms confirms our conclusion. The first case in point is 3:18 and 3:21.

for if the inheritance is by the law, it is no longer by promise (v. 18).

for if a law that has the power to give life had been given, righteousness would have been by the law (v. 21).

The parallelism between the two verses is fairly strong. Both employ a rhetorical *argumentatio ad absurdum*, positing a hypothetical situation (εἰ γάρ) in which ἐκ νόμου instead of ἐξ ἐπαγγελίας⁸³ comes in as the answer. What is noteworthy here is the switch from ‘the inheritance (v. 18) to ‘the righteousness’ (v. 21). The major contested issue throughout is, of course, the inheritance (3:15-29), but the fact that

⁸¹ See chapter three.

⁸² Since Paul envisages future salvation as a single reality, this conclusion presents itself very naturally.

⁸³ In v. 21 the actual phrase is missing, but the following statement in v. 22 shows that the thought is clearly there.

Paul can casually speak of 'the righteousness' while discussing the inheritance suggests that for him the two are functional synonyms.

A similar correspondence is also observable in 3:22-24.

But the scripture has imprisoned all things under sin,

so that the promise from faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe (v. 22).

Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came,

so that we might be justified by faith (vv. 23-24).

The two statements are similar both in idea and structure: the negative function of the law leading to the positive consequence of faith. The only noticeable difference is that the latter looks at the situation with its effect on human beings in mind, while the former focuses on the law itself.⁸⁴ As he describes the consequence or purpose of the enslaving function of the law, Paul speaks at once of 'receiving the promise' (v. 22) and 'being justified' (v. 24), thereby giving the impression that they are basically analogous. Since the 'promise' is that of 'inheritance' (vv. 15-18),⁸⁵ here too, we can see the correspondence between the promised inheritance and justification.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ So Martyn 362, noting the appearance of 'we' in v. 23. The suggestion that the 'we' in v. 23, in contra-distinction to τὰ πάντα in the previous verse, refers to 'Jews' should be rejected. *Contra* Longenecker 145; Dunn 197-8. Dunn's conscious emphasis on the 'positive' nature of Paul's view of the law, without doubt, born out of his concern for the *heilsgeschichtliche* continuity seems off the mark, at least in Galatians.

⁸⁵ So Schlier 145; Fung 165; Dunn 195.

⁸⁶ This clear convergence of inheritance and justification is mostly missed out. Fung 165-6, 176-7, is a rare exception. In his words, 'justification by faith is seen to be the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham' (177). His view is, of course, that of 'realized inheritance/justification'. Cf. Mußner 254. The inheritance and righteousness certainly converge, but they do so as future eschatological blessings.

A similar correspondence between inheritance and justification is also visible in Paul's move from 4:21-31 to 5:1-5.⁸⁷ In both passages Paul's argument is sustained by the stark antithesis of ἐλευθερία/πνεῦμα versus δουλεία/νόμος. In the allegory of Sarah and Hagar the child who belongs to the realm of freedom/promise/Spirit will receive the promised inheritance, while the one belonging to the realm of slavery/law is expelled from the household of the promise. Similarly, in 5:1-5 Paul affirms that it is only by persevering in the freedom of the Spirit that one will get to the 'hope of righteousness', while resorting to 'yoke of slavery' (the law) simply means excision from Christ Himself. Remaining in the Christ-given freedom of the Spirit will bring the inheritance, i.e., the hope of righteousness; turning back to the law will only cause an expulsion from the promise, since it only means a fall from Christ and his grace. Paul's talk of 'promise/inheritance' drawn from the Abrahamic tradition is in fact just another way of expounding the same truth of justification by faith.⁸⁸

According to our exposition, then, Paul is no anomaly in the futuristic understanding of the Abrahamic tradition in early Judaism and Christianity. There is, of course, no denying that Paul is an innovative interpreter of his tradition. Yet his innovation is mainly christological, which does not involve a realized eschatological redefinition of the promised inheritance in terms of the Spirit. Christ came, and the Galatians received the Spirit. This does not, however, affect the validity of God's ancient promise of 'the land'. On the contrary, now both Christ and the Spirit are seen as God's final confirmation, rather than fulfilment, of this promise (cf. 2 Cor 1:20!), and as the only way through which to attain to this promised inheritance of God's

⁸⁷ Scholarly uncertainty over the role of 5:1 illustrates the unity of Paul's running argument between 4:21-21 and 5:1-6. Williams 132. Cf. Merk, 'Beginn' (1969) 83-104 (with a survey); Matera, 'Culmination' (1988); Harnisch, 'Einübung' (1987).

⁸⁸ Cosgrove's claim that inheritance is never designated as justification is a superficial one. *Cross* (1988) 60, 64 n. 44; 'Arguing' (1988) 547.

eschatological land which Paul and other early Christians called ‘the Kingdom of God’ (5:21b) in which they are to receive the gift of God’s justification (5:5) and eternal life (6:7-9).

Conclusion

The conspicuously future eschatological thrust of Paul’s argument, much of which is taken up with the discussion of promise and inheritance, has become clear. In the Galatian context this ‘inheritance’ is clearly used as an epithet for eschatological salvation drawn from the Scriptures, namely, the kingdom of God and eternal life. It has also become clear that this future inheritance is not different from the hope of righteousness (5:5), the central subject of Paul’s argument. From first to last, then, Paul’s argument is sustained by one single aim: to demonstrate that future salvation comes only ‘by faith’, ‘through promise’, and therefore, ‘by the Spirit’. It can be variously phrased as ‘justification’, ‘Kingdom of God’ or ‘eternal life’, but the point remains the same: one will be able to attain it only πνεύματι ἐκ πίστεως.

The purpose of this consistently eschatological argument seems fairly obvious. By writing the letter, Paul warns of the dreadful eschatological consequences of the Galatians’ present deviation from the gospel and encourages them to persevere in faith and the Spirit so that they may be able to attain to the hoped-for salvation. It is from this future eschatological perspective that Paul perceives the crisis in Galatia as a crisis. From the same perspective he also develops his theological argument in which he presents faith and the Spirit as the exclusive means of attaining future salvation.⁸⁹ As far as this eschatological ‘not yet’ remains, it is crucial to hold on to faith and the Spirit since only in that way is one able to attain to the promised

⁸⁹ This is what we already anticipated in chapter two.

inheritance, the hope of righteousness. And this is why the present crisis in Galatia, the Galatians' departure from the Spirit, constitutes such a critical matter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PAUL'S CHRISTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Paul's future eschatological perspective in Galatians has become clear. Our examination of Paul's argument thus far, however, leaves a crucial dimension of it untouched: his interpretation of the Christ event. Following Paul's argument, it is not difficult to see how crucial his view of the Christ event is in sustaining his argument.¹ Not surprisingly, therefore, in scholarly interpretation of the letter it is this christological focus that is thought to form the foundation of Paul's realized eschatological perspective. By associating the contested privileges such as righteousness and inheritance exclusively with the Christ event in the past which supposedly marked the inauguration of the new aeon, Paul tells the Galatians that those blessings have *already* been bestowed on those who exercise their faith and thereby have participated in Christ, for which the gift of the Spirit serves as the evidence *par excellence*. With these privileges already available without the law, Paul's polemic against the law is then particularly focused on its *eschatological superfluity*. It is by pointing at the 'already' established by the cross of Christ that Paul effectively demolishes the anachronistic 'not yet' of the agitators.²

¹ This is widely noted. Gaventa, 'Singularity' (1991) 149; Weima, 'Gal. 6:11-18' (1993) 90-107; Cook, 'Prescript' (1992) 511-519; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 380. It is misleading, however, to posit Christ as 'one of the main matters in dispute' as Grayston, *Dying* (1990) 69 does. Cf. Kertelge, 'Gesetz' (1984) 385. Paul is not debating about Christ but responding to the crisis caused by circumcision with his own interpretation of the Christ event.

² This is the consensus. See Introduction. As Hübner, *Law* (1984) 18 puts it, 'why do you therefore seek to take the circuitous route by way of circumcision and thus by way of the law when it is not in the least necessary, nay more, when it is not in the least possible?' Also Lincoln, *Paradise* (1981) 11; Johnson, *Writings* (1986) 308, 311; Keck, *Letters* (1988) 72-73; Barclay, *Obedying* (1988) 102-3; Hong, *Law* (1993) 27, 76-78, 88-89, *passim*; idem, 'Perspective' (1991) 1-16; Wright, 'Gospel' (1994); Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 225; Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 73-4, 142-46, 182, 217; Dunn, *Theology* (1993) 99-100. Cf. Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation* (1986) 81.

In this chapter, we make two major claims. First, this ‘realized eschatological’ interpretation is the outcome of reading a theology into Paul’s contextual argument (sections 1-3). In a sense, this is a difficult task, because the Christ event *is* a past event. This being so, it is all too easy to read ‘realized eschatology’ into Paul’s language which may have no such implication at all. Paul speaks of the event in the past tense because he cannot do otherwise, but it does not necessarily mean that he is pressing a realized eschatological logic for the Galatians. Our thesis is that once we read Paul’s christological argument as his response to the problem of *the Galatian apostasy* we will see clearly that it does not show any such intent. This will be followed by a second, more positive claim that Paul’s focus on the Christ event is his way of highlighting the critical role of the Spirit in the Galatians’ quest for justification and inheritance (section 4).

1. Does Christ mark the new age?

Rescue from the present evil age (1:4)

In Paul’s interpretation of Christ’s death as the rescue ‘from the present evil age’ (ἐκ τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦ ἐνεστώτος πονηροῦ), scholars commonly see an explicit expression of realised eschatology, supposing that Paul interprets the Christ event as the ‘dawn of the new age’ or ‘the turn of the ages’.³ However, several considerations make us wary of such conclusion.

³ This is the majority view. E.g., G. Vos, *Eschatology* (1930) 12, 24; Davies, *Rabbinic* (1970) 36; Wengst, *Formeln* (1972) 61; Ladd, *Theology* (1974) 38, 68-69; Brinsmead, *Dialogical*, 61-67, 189; Meeks, *Urban* (1983) 176; Silva, ‘Eschatological’ (1994) 146; Hong, *Law* (1993) 77-78; Adams, *World* (2000) 224, 227; Martyn 90 101.

First, as Betz points out,⁴ the issue here is ‘the liberation “out of” the evil aeon and not of the change of the aeons themselves’. What Paul means is, ‘while the present evil aeon continues, Christ’s coming and the gift of the Spirit have granted freedom to the believers in Christ’.⁵ In Galatians Christ’s work of redemption (3:13; 4:5; 5:1, 13) marks the beginning of the battle between the Spirit and the evil flesh, which is to be fought with a vivid awareness of the ‘not yet’ (5:1-6; 5:21b; 6:7-9).⁶ The Christ event surely marks the crucial turning point, but in Paul’s language this ‘turning’ is never that of the *ages*.

Second, the wording ‘the *present* evil age’ renders the intention of ‘realised eschatology’ unlikely. The predicate ἐνεστώς, replacing the usual οὔτος or νῦν, is clearly emphatic, accentuating ‘the threatening presence’⁷ of this evil age. This is certainly an unlikely step to take if Paul means to suggest the present reality of the new age.⁸ That at the outset of the letter Paul labels the time *after* Christ as ‘the *present* evil aeon’ must be taken seriously.

Thirdly, the unusual form of ‘the present evil age’ is also noteworthy. That this ‘age’ or ‘world’ is evil is a Pauline commonplace (Rom 12:2; 1Cor 1:20; 2:6, 8; 2Cor 4:4; Eph 5:16), but the actual phrase ‘*evil* age’ occurs only here, with an emphasis on its morally evil character.⁹ This emphasis fits nicely with the preceding reference to Christ’s death ‘for our sins’. It seems that Paul, by stressing the evil nature of this age, intentionally highlights the moral consequence of Christ’s redemption. It is not

⁴ Betz 42; Longenecker 8. Witherington 77 notes this, but still insists on the ‘new age’.

⁵ Silva, ‘Eschatological’ (1994) 146 retorts that Betz’s ‘objection would be valid if Paul could not think in terms of an overlapping of the ages’ (146). This begs the question. Where do we find evidence for the idea?

⁶ Rightly, Grayston, *Dying* (1990) 70: the redemption is that from our ‘hopeless situation’ but not into the ‘new age’.

⁷ Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 72. Also Mußner 51; Schlier 33: ‘etwas drohendes Hereinstehendes’.

⁸ Rightly, Furnish, ‘Christological’ (1993) 113: ‘Neither “new creation”...nor “new age” is specifically in view here’.

⁹ So Lightfoot 71; Burton 13; Longenecker 9; Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 73.

difficult to see the relevance of this emphasis to what Paul is to say later in the letter, especially in chapters five and six (3:22!; 5:24!). In sum, Paul's references to the Christ's 'rescue from the present evil age' (1:4) do not suggest the inauguration of the new age by Christ's redemption.

New age in Paul?

More generally, scholars commonly suppose that for Paul the new age is somehow already inaugurated in the present, producing characteristic 'overlapping of the ages' which forms the fundamental framework of Paul's theology as a whole. A two-age scheme in Paul is a reasonable supposition, but the way Paul speaks of the matter hardly enables us to affirm the present realization of the new age. A few considerations can be made.

First, Paul *never* speaks of 'the coming age' in his undisputed writings.¹⁰ Given the fundamental importance that scholars confer on this scheme, Paul's silence on this key motif is striking. Despite the scholarly tendency to relativize the significance of this silence, it is indeed a phenomenon that is very hard, if not impossible, to explain on the assumption of the 'realized' new age, especially in contrast with his heavy reference to 'this age'.

Secondly, the phrase, 'the coming age' occurs in Ephesians 1:21 but somewhat later we also come across the plural 'the coming *ages*' (2:7), implying many more ages still to come. Significantly, this 'coming age', despite the strong realized eschatological emphasis of the letter, definitely lies in the future. In Ephesians the Christ event did not inaugurate the new age.

¹⁰ This is noted by Conzelmann, *Outline* (1969) 207. Most scholars seem to have a predetermined penchant for the two-age scheme. Keck is typical: '*Although* Paul never uses

Thirdly, the closest Paul moves to such an idea is his reference to ‘the ends of the ages’, both in the plural (1 Cor 10:11). Now believers stand at the end of many ages, not just of the present one.¹¹ Even if the plurals are merely rhetorical, standing at the end of the ages is a far cry from the actual arrival of a new age.

Fourthly, the way Paul alternates between ‘this age’ and ‘this world’ (κόσμος) in 1 Corinthians as the opposite *not* of ‘the coming aeon’ *but* of ‘God’ also suggests that the intended contrast is more ontological or moral than eschatological (1:20-21, 27-8; 2:6, 8, 12; cf. Rom 12:2).¹² Paul’s argument in the passage does not require the idea of a new age, whether realized or not. Judging from Paul’s own writings, the notion of ‘the overlapping of the ages’ seems out of the question.¹³

Intertextuality?

Since Paul never speaks explicitly of a ‘realized’ new age, scholars mostly resort to the logic of intertextuality supposedly generated by Paul’s use of Jewish apocalyptic motifs: ‘revelation’,¹⁴ ‘the Spirit’,¹⁵ ‘Jerusalem above’¹⁶ and most crucially, ‘new

the entire phrase, his references to “this aeon” show that he *assumes* the duality’. *Letters* (1988) 74.

¹¹ Hays’ clever rendering, ‘on whom the ends of the ages have met’ is wrong. Granted the dual meaning of the plurals, what he needs is the ‘end’ (τέλος) of one and the ‘beginning’ (ἀρχή) of another, not two ‘ends’ (τελή). The Greek τέλος never refers to the ‘beginning’ end. *Moral Vision* (1996) 20, 56 n. 14.

¹² Cf. Adams, *World* (2000) 227. Certainly, Paul does not mean that God belongs to the coming age.

¹³ Baumgarten’s sober assessment of relevant data in *Apokalyptik* (1975) 180-184 seems lost in the enthusiastic hail of Paul the apocalyptic.

¹⁴ Bornkamm, ‘Revelation’ (1974) 95-96: since the word originally refers to ‘a freshly commencing, aeon-changing, eschatological act of God’, Paul, by speaking of ‘the “coming” of faith’, ‘gives the apocalyptic idea a radical new twist, by relating it no longer to a saving event which is yet to come but to that which has already been realized’. Also Kim, *Origin* (1984) 72, 274; Martyn (see Introduction).

¹⁵ See 6.3 above.

¹⁶ Most strongly, Lincoln, *Paradise* (1981) 18-22 followed by Hanson, *Abraham* (1989) 149-50. Also see Mußner 326; Cosgrove, ‘Sarah’ (1987) 231; Lambrecht, ‘Abraham’ (1999) 528. Despite his otherwise strong realized eschatological interpretation, Martyn 440 is much soberer: ‘the community that is both above and future, being ready to descend to earth *at the*

creation'.¹⁷ The logic is simple. In the Jewish apocalyptic tradition these motifs are associated with the new age. Paul uses them to describe the present effect of the Christ event. By so doing, Paul in effect claims that the waited-for eschaton/new age has been inaugurated through the work of Jesus Christ.

Despite its being a virtual consensus, this view builds upon several questionable assumptions. First, the Gentile Galatians, if they are to detect such a subtle move at all, must have substantial familiarity with the Jewish apocalyptic thought-world. But it is not easy to imagine that the Gentile Galatians living at the heart of the Greco-Roman world knew the Jewish apocalyptic well enough to catch the radical claim of 'new age' supposedly communicated by such a subtle means.¹⁸ Paul the Jew might have entertained such a possibility, but it would have most probably been lost on the ears of the Gentile Galatians.

Secondly, the logic of intertextuality requires that these motifs are 'technical terms', i.e., virtual synonyms of the 'new age', which automatically conjures up the idea of 'new age' *regardless of context*. If they also contain other connotations, more than one intertextual inferences are possible, and readers would be at a loss which aspect of these potential meanings Paul intends. This sort of exclusivity is indeed too big an assumption to make. For example, Mell makes a strong case for the technical meaning of the 'new creation',¹⁹ but is its bond with the 'new age' strong enough to exclude other connotations and disallow any further change of its meaning? When Paul invokes such motifs as 'revelation' or 'the Spirit' in relation to the Christ event, is the idea of 'new age' as obvious as is usually assumed?

parousia' (emphasis added). For a sober assessment of the data against the background of the Jewish thought, see Horbury, 'Land' (1996) 219-222.

¹⁷ See section 3 below.

¹⁸ In reality, for this sort of subtle method to work, the tradition has to be an integral part of one's world-view so as to generate an immediate response to any change to it.

¹⁹ Mell, *Neue Schöpfung* (1986) 47-257.

Thirdly, granting that these motifs are technical terms for 'new age', it does not necessitate the inference of the presence of the new age. An easier inference would be that *Paul uses these words in different senses*. He takes them up out of their original contexts and puts them to a very different use, that is, to speak of the immediate consequence of the Christ event without necessarily implying the presence of the new age.²⁰ The rabbinic use of the 'new creation' motif shows how easily this can be done (*Gen. Rab.* 39.14). Changing the meaning of words would have been much easier than turning the ages themselves. Especially when Paul himself never makes any explicit claim to such effect, why should we draw such a difficult inference?

Fourthly, despite scholarly willingness to endorse the idea, one has to remember that for Paul's contemporaries for whom the new age is so obviously 'not yet', the claim of a 'new age' must have been a very difficult idea which will not easily get across unless one makes it absolutely clear. Yet in his extant writings Paul never speaks of 'new age'; on the contrary he himself explicitly states that the new age is still in the future (Eph 1:21; 2:7).²¹ Under the circumstances, no sensible person would have guessed Paul's alleged claim of a new age. Just a few allusions are not enough for an 'incredible' claim. Even if Paul had said 'new age' over and over again, people could not have helped asking back, 'What on earth do you mean by that?', probably thinking that Paul is using the term 'new age' very strangely.

Fifthly, instructively, Paul's use of another 'apocalyptic' motif belies the alleged intertextual logic of the new age: the apocalyptic birth pangs (4:19; cf. 4:27; 1 Thess 5:3). To be sure, this motif too is associated with the eschaton but its reference is not

²⁰ Concerning the 'new creation', Adams, *Constructing* (2000) 226 recognizes this possibility without pursuing it further. Baumgarten, *Apokalyptik* (1975) 169-70, while still subscribing to a realized eschatological view, thinks that Paul 'radically decosmologized' the meaning of this phrase.

²¹ Even if not Pauline, the letter certainly belongs to Pauline tradition. And the author's overall realized eschatological tendency suggests that this idea comes from Paul.

to the new age itself but to the tribulation which *precedes* it, namely, the *antecedent* events to the birth/coming of the Messiah (1QH 11:9-11; cf. Mk 13:8; Mt 24:8; Rev 12). As the imagery goes, the mood is a desperate ‘not yet’ rather than that of a confident ‘already’. Paul’s application of this imagery to his present ministry is therefore suggestive. By depicting his ministry as ‘apocalyptic’ birth pains, Paul in effect labels the present crisis ‘an instance of the last-ditch effort by which God’s enemies hope to thwart the eschatological redemption of the elect’.²²

The thrust of the imagery is clear: the present situation ‘preclude[s] a simple reference to the Galatians’ birth as a punctiliar event accomplished in the past’.²³ That is, the intertextual meaning generated by this motif is precisely the opposite: with Christ yet to be born, the Galatians are now in the pre-Messianic period. Hence, an appeal to the logic of apocalyptic intertextuality is inherently self-defeating, for the simple reason that Paul’s use of the apocalyptic motifs is confusing in its possible eschatological implications. This means that the alleged eschatological intertextuality is not part of Paul’s intention behind his use of ‘apocalyptic’ motifs. Speaking of the presence of the new age in Paul, popular as it may be, is certainly going beyond the evidence in Paul himself.

2. *Christ and the law*

Now we move on to Paul’s interpretation of the Christ event in terms of liberation or redemption from the law. All too often, due to the theological weight of the subject (Christology), interpreters fail to perceive the immediate purpose of Paul’s discussion. Our purpose here is to bring out its *contextual* meaning, no doubt, with a view to

²² Martyn 430.

²³ Martyn 429.

showing the problem of a realized eschatological reading. We discuss Paul's christological argument in three parts: 3:10-14; 3:15-29 and 4:1-7.

Christ and the curse of the law (3:10-14)

Apart from the adumbration in 2:19-21, 3:10-14 is Paul's first extant interpretation of the Christ event in relation to the law, which follows up his argument concerning the blessing of Abraham in 3:8-9.²⁴ Here Paul takes several radical steps. First, he draws a dark picture of the law. That one is not justified 'in the law' (v. 11) is familiar (2:16), but Paul presses this shared conviction one step further. Instead of providing the blessing of justification, the law only incurs curse: 'all who belong to works of the law are under curse' (v.10)²⁵. Together with this, he also drives a clear wedge between law and faith: 'the law is not of faith' (12). Depicting the law as demanding exclusive allegiance to its own 'way of life' (3:12),²⁶ Paul simplifies the matter as a clear-cut 'either/or'. Thirdly, Paul reinterprets the shared conviction of Christ's death 'for us' (ὕπὲρ ἡμῶν)²⁷ by relating it to the curse of the law: 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law' (v. 13).²⁸ By relating the law with curse and defining Christ as the

²⁴ Sanders, *Law* (1983) 22; Dunn 169.

²⁵ The curse is not just possibility but reality. *Contra* Stanley, 'Curse' (1990) 500; Witherington 233; Williams 90; Spanje, *Inconsistency* (1999) 202-3. The only reason Paul *actually* gives for this is people's failure to keep the law *in toto* (v. 10b). Cf. Luz, *Geschichtsverständnis* (1968) 149. Paul's conviction is surely christological, which, however, inevitably involves an anthropological judgment. *Contra* Sanders, *Palestinian* (1977) 482-4; Donaldson, 'Curse' (1986) 101; Cousar, *Cross* (1990) 114.

²⁶ Rightly, Choi, 'Spirit' (1998) 189. The contrast is not between 'performance' and 'faith'. *Contra* Mußner 230-1; Westerholm, *Law* (1988) 113-4; Kruse, *Law* (1996) 84. Dunn's assertion (117) that Paul's quote of Lev 28:5 is 'essentially a positive view' is prejudiced. After v. 10 and before v. 13, this is an ironical way of announcing death (curse) rather than life. The covenant was not 'effective ... for Israel' during the time before Christ (175-6); they were 'under curse' and in effect outside the covenant (3:11, 13, 22), as Dunn himself, self-contradictorily, acknowledges (178).

²⁷ Whether this is pre-Pauline (Betz 150; Longenecker 121-2) or not (Dunn 177) is the question we cannot know the answer.

²⁸ Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 153-54; Räisänen, *Law* (1983) 59. Whether Paul develops such a view for the first time here or has already done so, probably in the light of his Damascus experience, is an issue attracting lively scholarly discussion. Strecker, 'Befreiung'

redemption from this curse of the law, the point of the whole argument is clear: the blessing of justification, and the Spirit for that matter, are only ‘in Christ Jesus’ and ‘by faith’ (v. 14). The conclusion in v. 14 then is no mere reiteration of justification by faith in 3:6-9.²⁹ After 3:10-13, the claim is more specific: the blessing comes to the Gentiles ‘in Christ Jesus’ and *not ἐξ ἔργων νόμου as the foolish Galatians (and the agitators behind them) would have it*. Since justification requires liberation from the curse of the law, the Galatians, if they are to be justified, should stay clear of the law.³⁰ Christ and the law are mutually incompatible.

Arguing for this incompatibility, Paul’s immediate point is that Christ’s soteriological significance (‘for us’), which is assumed to be obvious, involves our liberation from the curse of the law. He grounds this controversial interpretation on a further claim that Christ himself became the curse on behalf of us: γενόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατάρα (cf. 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Cor 1:30). It is to justify this second claim that Paul appeals to the Christ event. To be precise, Paul’s concern is not Christ’s death itself but the specific information that he died ‘on a tree’ since it is this particular fact that provides the necessary justification of his association of Christ’s death with curse: ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’ (Deut 21:23).³¹

In this antithetical logic of law/curse and Christ/redemption we do not see any particular intention of capitalizing on the ‘already’ of the latter. Christ surely liberated us but turning this into ‘an act in which the law was robbed of its universal power to

(1975) 479-508; Stendahl, *Paul* (1976) 23-40; Räisänen, *Law* (1983) 229 (256-63); Dunn, *Law* (1990) 89-107; Suhlman, *Reconciliation* (1986) 68-93, 110-168; Kim, *Origin* (1984) 269-311.

²⁹ Many interpreters fail to appreciate the polemical note directed at the ‘judaizing Galatians’. E.g., Dunn 168-180; Wright, *Climax* (1991) 153-56; Donaldson, ‘Curse’ (1990) 94-112.

³⁰ Unlike Sanders, *Law* (1983) 25-26, v. 13 is therefore crucial for Paul’s argument.

³¹ Rightly, Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 78. For this verse see Wilcox, ‘Upon the Tree’ (1977) 85-99. For the data in Qumran (4QpNah; 11QTemple 64:6-13), see Fitzmyer, *Advance* (1981) 125-46.

curse'³² is squeezing Paul's language too much since it ignores the Galatian context in which the curse of the law *is* posing a serious threat. Speaking of curse and redemption, therefore, Paul's primary concern is the Galatians in the present, not the Jewish Christians³³ or humanity in general³⁴ in the past: 'All who *are* (εἰσίν) of works of the law *are* (εἰσίν) under curse' (v. 10); 'Christ redeemed *us*' (v. 13).³⁵ That is why Paul, addressing the Gentile Galatians, presents Christ as *our* liberation from the curse of *the law*.

In context, this is clearly a way of warning the Galatians that their attraction to the law means losing the freedom in Christ and returning to the curse of the law instead of justification.³⁶ Could anyone in the Galatian churches have missed the sharp lash of criticism when Paul announces, 'All who (ὅσοι) belong to works of the law are under curse' (v. 10)?³⁷

Abraham, Christ and law (3:15-29)

In 3:15-25 Paul's polemic continues but now with a chronological logic. Paul's argument is twofold (vv. 15-18, vv. 19-29). First, the law came much later (μετά) than the promise which had already (πρό) been ratified by God (vv. 16a, 18). On the basis

³² Martyn 321; *idem*, 'Crucial Event' (1996); Luz, *Geschichtsverständnis* (1968) 153.

Scholarly failure to relate v. 10 to v. 13 is surprising. If the law had lost its cursing power, taking it up would not do any harm to the Galatians.

³³ *Contra* Lightfoot 140; Betz 148; Donaldson, 'Curse' (1986) 95; Hong, *Law* (1993) 141; Wright, *Climax* (1991) 154. The problem of this view is 'we' in v. 14, which refers to the Galatians. Cf. Räisänen, *Law* (1983) 19: 'Now, it would be strange, if the pronoun tacitly changed its reference in v. 14'.

³⁴ *Contra* Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 153, 182; Bruce 167; Dunn 176-77; Cousar, *Cross* (1990) 116.

³⁵ Addressing the Galatians, 'us' includes the Galatians. See Hübner, *Law* (1984) 150.

³⁶ Rightly, Spanje, *Inconsistency* (1999) 202-6. Cf. Stanley, 'Curse' (1990) 501 and Patte, *Paul's Faith* (1983) 48-57. The view of Donaldson, 'Curse' (1989) 102 that Paul interprets the Christ event as liberation from the curse of the law because it 'is not possible to make an end run around the law and those in its domain' misses the point.

³⁷ Esler, *Galatians* (1998) 254 n. 9; Sanders, *Paul* (1991) 57-8. Martyn 317 n. 105 notes that Paul turns to such words as κατάρα and ἐξαγοράζω 'for the Galatian situation', but still fails to bring it to bear on his interpretation of v. 13.

of the testamentary principle of finality adduced in v. 15, it then follows that the law is not the proper channel of inheritance (v. 17). Second, Christ marks the termination of the law as our παιδαγωγός.³⁸ Since Christ too is a recipient of God's promise as Abraham's Seed (vv. 16, 19), his coming marked the effective reinstitution of the promise covenant, and therefore the end of our imprisonment under the control of the law (vv. 19-25). Again, the result is that the inheritance is only available 'through promise', that is, 'in Christ' (vv. 26-29). Paul's logic is clear. In relation to the promise, the law came too late; in relation to Christ/faith, it had run its course, when he finally came. Between Abraham on one side and Christ on the other, the law is, so to speak, edged out.³⁹ Therefore, the law has no place in the Galatian believers' quest for justification/inheritance which is only 'by promise'.

Here Paul's logic is consistently chronological, as is confirmed by his liberal use of temporal references.⁴⁰ The law came in 430 years after (μετά) the promise which had been ratified earlier (προκεκυρωμένην, v. 17). The law had been here only 'until' (ἄχρις οὗ) the Seed came (v. 19). We were under the law 'before' (πρό) the coming of faith, namely, only 'until' (εἰς)⁴¹ the revelation of faith (v. 23).⁴² The law had been our disciplinarian 'until' (εἰς) the time of Christ (v. 24). Thus, 'Now that faith has come, we⁴³ are no longer (οὐκέτι) under the disciplinarian' (v. 25).

³⁸ This has been the subject of intense scholarly discussion. For attempts to highlight its positive role, see Young, 'Paidagogos' (1987) 150-76 (with extensive background discussion); Belleville, 'Under Law' (1986) 53-78 (59-63); Lull, 'Pedagogue' (1986) 481-98 which also contains a bibliography for the negative view.

³⁹ Cf. Conzelmann, *Outline* (1969) 223; Watson, *Text* 190-91; Barrett, *Paul* (1994) 73.

⁴⁰ Cf. Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 118; Witherington 262; Donaldson, *Gentiles* (1997) 65.

⁴¹ In both v. 23 and v. 24, the sense is clearly chronological. So most commentators, e.g., Duncan 121-2, 128; Betz 178; Mußner 257; Longenecker 148-9; Bruce 183. *Contra* Burton 200 ('pregnant use'); Fung 169-170. Paul's emphatic point in this verse is that the law was our custodian *only* until Christ so that our justification may be *exclusively* by faith in Christ.

⁴² That is, revelation of 'faith', not 'Christ'. Paul speaks of the revelation of many 'things' (e.g., Rom 1:17, 18; 2:5; 8:18; 1 Cor 2:10; Phil 3:15) or of the *risen* Christ (1 Cor 1:7; 2 Cor 12:1; Gal 1:12, 16; Eph 3:3; 2 Thess 1:7) but never of 'Christ' to denote his first coming.

⁴³ See nn. 33-34 above.

The way Paul appeals to the Christ event also changes accordingly. Since Christ now functions as a carrier of God's promise, and since Paul's logic is mainly chronological, all Paul needs to claim the priority of the promise and the temporary function of the law is Christ's 'coming' (vv. 19, 23, 25). Thus, how he died ('hanging on a tree', 3:13) or how he was born ('being born of a woman'/'under the law', 4:4) is not relevant for this particular argument.

Is Paul's claim here, as most scholars believe, the eschatological superfluity of the law? The chronological thrust of the argument and especially the statement in v. 19 seem to imply this idea. We have to be careful, however, since the law *is* still alive and active, which is eloquently illustrated by 'the present Jerusalem' (4:25) and now, to Paul's dismay, by the crisis in Galatia. The Galatian crisis itself presupposes the ongoing relevance of the law and its curse (3:10; 4:8-11; 5:1).⁴⁴ The change happens to us, not to the 'law'. The demise Christ's coming occasioned is not that of the law itself but that of *believers' slavery*. 'But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian' (3:25). This forms an interesting contrast to the idea of Christ as 'the end of the law' in Romans (10:4). It is simply not true to say that the coming of Christ rendered the law eschatologically 'obsolete' or 'inoperative',⁴⁵ not even the *nuda lex* ('naked law').⁴⁶ It is precisely because the law is so lethal, cursing and enslaving those who are under it, that the Galatians' foolish wish to be under the law constitutes such a serious crisis.

In the context in which the Galatians want to take up the law, Paul's chronological argument can hardly be a realized eschatological affirmation of the 'already' of

⁴⁴ Paul's use of 'the Scripture' for 'the law' (v. 22) may be an indication of this. Belleville, 'Under Law' (1986) 56, 58 disputes the equation of the two, but the parallelism is too strong to be explained away. Compare v. 22 and vv. 23-24.

⁴⁵ *Contra* Hübner, *Theologie* (1993) 83 and most others.

⁴⁶ *Contra* Cranfield, 'Law' (1964) 62-63; Hong, *Law* (1993) 125-169.

freedom from the law and the superfluity of the latter. This sort of announcement is meaningless anyway since the Galatians can join the law and thereby scrap this ‘no longer’ and ‘already’ anytime they want, as indeed they wish to do now. With the law posing a serious threat to the Galatians’ quest for God’s inheritance (3:18), Paul’s chronological argument, accentuating the *incompatibility* of the law with promise and faith,⁴⁷ functions as a strong *warning* to the Galatians of the consequence of their foolish behaviour. One is either ἐν Χριστῷ or ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν; one cannot belong to two different ‘periods’ at the same time. Of course, they can choose to belong to the ‘time’ of the law, but then it means they *lose* the freedom Christ has brought for them (3:25-26), and *return* to their former life in slavery, with the result that they will also lose the promised inheritance which only comes by faith. Paul’s logic here is not that of realized eschatology.

Christ and slavery under the law (4:1-7)

Paul’s discussion of Christ in 4:1-7 combines the motif of ‘liberation from the law’ in 3:10-14 and the chronological thrust and emphasis on ‘heirship’ in 3:15-29. Here too, Paul’s skilful use of time references, contrasting the times ‘before’ and ‘after’ Christ, effectively highlights the law’s incompatibility with Christ. In the illustration (1-2) we hear that the heir does not differ from a slave ‘during the time when’ (ἐφ’ ὅσον χρόνον) he is a minor, and he is under guardians and trustees ‘until’ (ἄχρι) the time set by the father. The contrast between slavery and liberation becomes more explicit in the explication (3-5): ‘when’ (ὅτε) we are minors, we were under the elements of the world (3), but ‘when’ (ὅτε) the fullness of time came, God sent His Son. The

⁴⁷ So Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 71.

result is our redemption from the law and adoption as sons (5), leading to the exclamation: ‘οὐκέτι you are a slave ἀλλά a son!’ (7a).

As we have seen,⁴⁸ Paul’s description of the time before Christ is singularly coloured by the motif of ‘slavery’ under the law (1-2, 3). Then ‘the fullness of time’⁴⁹ came, and God sent His Son accordingly (cf. 3:25). This may have been enough in another context, but Paul continues: Christ was ‘born of a woman’ and ‘came under the law’. The purpose is obvious: ‘so that he might redeem those who were under the law’ (5a), and ‘so that we⁵⁰ might receive adoption as sons’ (5b). Paul’s point is simple: since the very purpose of Christ’s coming is our redemption from the law, commitment to him necessarily entails the dissolution of any relation to the law. The result is, of course, exactly the same: the law and Christ do not mix.

Once again, Paul’s depiction of the Christ event is determined by the specific point he wants to get across in this particular argument. As in 3:10-13 the salvific significance of Christ’s death is presupposed. His immediate claim here is that it involves liberation from the law.⁵¹ That Christ redeemed us from the law is backed by the fact that he too came to be ‘under the law’, which is further justified by the fact that Christ was ‘born of a woman’. This time it is Christ’s incarnation, not his ‘hanging on a tree’ (3:13) nor his ‘coming’ (3:15-25), that Paul needs to maintain his claim of ‘freedom from the law’.⁵²

⁴⁸ See 6.2 above.

⁴⁹ See n. 96 in chapter five.

⁵⁰ See nn. 33-34 above.

⁵¹ 3:10-14 is designed to prove that the Abrahamic ‘blessing’ does not come from the law. Accordingly, its ‘curse’ receives accent, with Christ becoming the redeemer from this ‘curse’. In 4:1-7 the law itself is at issue, and therefore Paul drops ‘curse’ and simply speaks of ‘the law’.

⁵² Our concern is to discern the contextual nature of Paul’s use of the Christ event and not to drive a theological wedge between the incarnation and the crucifixion. See the caution by Hooker, *Adam* (1990) 15.

Here too, we should be careful not to squeeze Paul's declaration, 'You are no longer slaves but sons!' (4:7a).⁵³ To be precise, Paul's point is the termination of our slavery,⁵⁴ and not the eschatological obsolescence of the law which remains as relevant as ever. In fact, for the Galatians in whose life the 'Abba' cry plays an essential role, Paul's declaration of sonship as evidenced by the Spirit is nothing more than a reminder of what they already know. What is really surprising is Paul's claim that this Spirit-sonship, which involved freedom from pagan idolatry, also involves freedom from *the law*. Addressed to the Galatians who are on the verge of joining it, this then is in no way an unconditional endorsement of their unchangeable sonship. On the contrary, this emphatic 'no longer' functions as a sharp warning, revealing the true nature of their behaviour and its consequence, as is easily confirmed by his charge of apostasy in the following verses (4:8-11). What Paul is actually saying to the Galatians is that they should not come under the law again if they are to remain as God's sons and heirs.

In sum, throughout the letter the upshot of Paul's christological argument is the *incompatibility* of Christ and the law. Each time, Paul presses this point from a different angle: Christ means liberation from the curse of the law (3:10-14), the end of the law as our *paidagogos* (3:15-25) and liberation from the slavery under the law (4:1-7). In turn, these claims are supported by appealing to different aspects of the Christ event according to the immediate need of Paul's logic: 'hanging on a tree' (3:10-14), 'coming' (3:15-25) and 'being born of a woman' (4:1-7).

⁵³ See Grayston, *Dying* (1990) 81-82.

⁵⁴ Cf. NEB; Lührmann 80.

Paul's appeal to the Christ event is therefore highly contextual and shows no particular intention of pressing a realized eschatological point. The Galatian crisis itself, in which the law is by no means obsolete or superfluous, falsifies a realized eschatological reading of Paul's christological argument. That Paul's logic is not eschatological is further confirmed by the allegory in 4:21-31 where both the law and promise, corresponding to the flesh and Spirit respectively, form *synchronic* alternatives for the Galatians to choose.⁵⁵ Paul's point throughout is not that the law is chronologically outdated, but that it is fatal, placing one under the sway of the flesh, the consequence of which is exclusion from God's inheritance (3:3, 10, 19-25; 4:3-5, 8-11, 30; 5:1, 18).

3. Paul's polemical use of the 'crucifixion' motif

Interestingly, Paul does not use the term crucifixion in his christological argument itself (3:10-4:7), but he uses it three times as he speaks of himself and the Galatians (2:19-20; 5:24; 6:14-16). Not surprisingly, these passages too are frequently adduced as evidence for Paul's realized eschatological perspective. But once again, proper attention to the context indicates that this is a misreading of Paul's intentions. The purpose of this section is to substantiate this claim.

The crucified Paul I (2:17-21)

The first use of the crucifixion image occurs in 2:19-20. The passage is variously construed, but in our view the whole section is Paul's criticism of Peter's behaviour as a breach of 'the truth of the gospel' (v.14), i.e., the truth of justification by faith. As Paul sees the matter, Peter's withdrawal from the Gentile believers amounted to

⁵⁵ Cf. Boers, *Justification* (1994) 70.

labelling the Jewish Christians ‘sinners’. Inasmuch as their mingling with Gentiles was encouraged by their belief that justification is only available in Christ, Peter’s behaviour in effect rendered Christ himself as ‘the agent of sin’ (v.17). Moreover, it also meant ‘reinstating’ the law which had already been demolished as incapable of providing righteousness (v. 16), making Peter himself a ‘transgressor’ (v.18). Paul’s manifesto in vv. 19-21 comes in as a polemic against such ‘hypocritical’⁵⁶ disposition of Peter, and against the propaganda of the agitators for that matter. Using Peter’s blunder as the launch pad, Paul declares his own stance *vis-à-vis* the law.⁵⁷

Shocking as it must have been in the ears of other Jewish Christians, Paul announces that his commitment to the crucified Christ involves his own death too, that is, his death in relation to the law: διὰ νόμου⁵⁸ νόμῳ⁵⁹ ἀπέθανον (v. 19). The shock doubles when he says that he died to the law ‘with a view to living in relation to God’ (v. 19). This is a bold polemic since it suggests that the law is only a *hindrance* to his life in relation to God.⁶⁰ Paul had to abandon the law because he simply could not have any life in relation to God while living under the law.⁶¹ Thus, any attempt to deny his ‘death in relation to the law’ by rebuilding it can only mean a flat denial of his God-oriented life. So Paul cries, ‘I do not nullify the grace of God!’⁶²

⁵⁶ Cousar 48 notes the observation of Wilckens, *TDNT* 8:565 that in Hellenistic Judaism the word also carried the meaning of ‘apostasy’, which coheres well with the Galatian problem of apostasy (1:6).

⁵⁷ Similarly, Anderson, *Rhetorical* (1996) 134.

⁵⁸ 3:13 and 4:4-5 seem to provide the most reliable key to this cryptic phrase. So Tannehill, *Dying* (1967) 58-9; Bruce 143; Fung 123. *Contra* Burton 133; Duncan 70.

⁵⁹ The primary connotation is ‘separation’. Burton 132; Fung 122; Martyn 256. Cf. Romans 6:2, 10, 11; 7:6.

⁶⁰ So Burton 134; Duncan 70-71. Cf. Ebeling, *Truth* (1985) 147.

⁶¹ One senses a strong polemic against the view of the law as a source of life. Deut 30: 15-20; 32:47; Ps 119; Prv 3:1f; Sir 17:11; 45:5; Bar 3:9; 4:1; m. Abot 2:7-8; 4 Ezra 7:17, 21; 14:30. But see Ezek 20:25.

⁶² Cf. Lightfoot 119.

It is to justify this refusal to take up the law again that Paul brings in the cross of Christ. Paul's focus, even fixation, on the motif of death is unmistakable.⁶³ For Paul committing himself to Christ means *participating* in his death/crucifixion (v. 19), which also involves his death in relation to the law.⁶⁴ And, as the perfect *συνεσταύρωμαι* indicates, it is the reality of his death, i.e., his severance from the law, that characterizes his present life in faith. Of course, Christ's resurrection too is presupposed (1:12, 16), but this should not obscure Paul's immediate purpose of accentuating his separation from the law. Thus, even this 'Christ living in me' is now perceived in the light of his death rather than resurrection: who 'loved me and gave himself for me' (v. 20).⁶⁵ V. 21 further confirms this: 'for if righteousness was from the law, Christ would have died in vain!' (v. 21). The effect of Paul's focus on the death motif is clear: his faith in the crucified Christ does not allow any room for the law.⁶⁶

Is this crucifixion of 'I' intended, as most scholars think, as a description of 'believers' objective position in Christ?⁶⁷ including the Galatians, with the 'I' being 'universal' or 'paradigmatic'?⁶⁸ This is not so, however.

First, in the context of the Antioch incident, the passage is part of Paul's polemical and personal manifesto.⁶⁹ As his emphatic *refusal* in v. 21 shows,⁷⁰ the main point is

⁶³ Cf. Hays, 'Christology' (1989) 278.

⁶⁴ Here Paul assumes that Christ's death is a death *vis-à-vis* the law.

⁶⁵ The two aorist verbs clearly point to Christ's death on the cross. See Vos, *Pneumatologie* (1973) 86: '[z]u beachten ist aber, daß Christus nicht in seiner Funktion als Auferstandener, sondern in der Funktion des Gekreuzigten erscheint'. See also Furnish, 'Christological Assertion' (1993) 113-15; Cousar 61.

⁶⁶ Mußner 179; Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982) 75.

⁶⁷ Burton 136; Fung 123, following Ladd, *Theology* (1974) 485.

⁶⁸ So most scholars, e.g., Betz 121; Kümmel, "Individualgeschichte" (1978) 140; Kertelge, 'Rechtfertigungslehre' (1968) 218-219; Martyn 102, 280.

⁶⁹ Rightly, Witherington 190; Ridderbos 106-7; Duncan 72; Davies 197; Burton 132, 134. *Contra* Weder, *Kreuz* (1981) 176-77.

⁷⁰ Rightly, Lambrecht, 'Reasoning' (1996) 59; Ebeling, *Truth* (1985) 150; Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 186-88. *Contra* Burton 140; Schlier 104.

his *determination* to make Christ the exclusive centre of his life in contradistinction to the disposition of Peter. No doubt, this *presupposes* a christological foundation, but that is not what Paul is getting at. It is Paul himself who tore down his relationship to the law; it is he who, unlike Peter, refuses to rebuild it (v. 18).

Secondly, in the context of the Galatian crisis too, Paul's statement functions as a *rebuke* of the Galatians.⁷¹ As we have seen,⁷² Paul's view of the present state of the Galatians is a bleak one, a disposition so *different* from his own: apostasy (1:6; 3:3; 4:8-11; 5:7); 'ending with flesh' (3:3); 'not obeying the truth' (5:7). Addressed to those who, desiring to be under the law (4:21), are turning a blind eye to Christ crucified (3:1), Paul's announcement of his own crucifixion 'with Christ' and 'to the law' can hardly be an affirmation of their faith in Christ.⁷³ No doubt, the truth of dying with Christ remains universal, equally applicable to the Galatians. The trouble is, however, that they themselves, enticed by the law, are *abandoning* this truth.⁷⁴ For this reason, Paul even changes the shared confession about 'Christ's death ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν' into his own personal experience of Christ 'who loved μέ and gave himself ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ', a move witnessed only here in his entire writings.⁷⁵ Thus, Paul's criticism of Peter, like his autobiographical narrative as a whole,⁷⁶ is his criticism of the behaviour

⁷¹ Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982) 69, 188 notes this, but still misses his own point.

⁷² See 2.2 above. The contrast between Paul's uprightness and the Galatians' deviation forms a major feature in Paul's argument (1:6-9; 4:12, 16; 6:12-15).

⁷³ Rarely, Suhl, 'Galaterbrief' (1987) 3113.

⁷⁴ The criticism of Schlier by Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 44 therefore also applies to Eckstein himself. Faith itself is now at issue not only between Peter and Paul but also between Paul and the Galatians. See Chrysostom.

⁷⁵ Here 'we' is traditional and 'I' a contextual adaptation (cf. Rom 8:31-39). Cf. Berényi, 'Gal 2,20' (1984) 529. Tannehill, *Dying* (1967) 57 worries about 'false subjectivising' but the real problem here is ignoring the context and reading too much theology into Paul's words.

⁷⁶ The Antioch incident concludes Paul's autobiographical narrative whose paenetic function is well acknowledged. Lyons, *Autobiography* (1985) 124-164; Gaventa, 'Galatians 1 and 2' (1986) 309-26; Williams 76-82; Stowers, *Letter Writing* (1986) 109; Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 145-6; B. Dodd, 'Paradigm' (1996) 90-104.

of the deviating Galatians.⁷⁷ Precisely because Paul's attitude is paradigmatic, it is also a stinging criticism of the Galatians who are attracted to the law.

The crucified Paul II (6:14-15)

Paul uses the crucifixion motif once again at the end of the letter, this time to contrast his apostolic disposition to the flesh-oriented policy of the agitators (vv. 12-13). Paul is adamant: 'May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ' (v. 14a). It is to explain this policy of his that he brings in the motif of crucifixion: through the cross⁷⁸ the 'world' has been crucified to him. Not only that, but he too has been crucified to the world. V. 15 explains why: 'for neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!'⁷⁹

For many, Paul's talk of double crucifixion, together with the motif of the 'new creation', provides evidence for Paul's realized eschatological outlook.⁸⁰ According to Martyn what we have here is 'the death of one world and the birth of another', i.e., the dawn of the new age, occasioned by the cross of Christ.⁸¹ Again, this claims too much. We make two points.

First, the crucifixion here is a very specific one. The world is not crucified in an absolute sense but only 'in relation to me'. This qualification is crucial since it clearly implies that otherwise the world still exists. Moreover, it is only the world that is crucified; Paul remains alive. The point is the dissolution of relationship. With the world crucified Paul cannot have any relationship with it. The opposite is equally true.

⁷⁷ So Ridderbos 98; Schlier 87-88; Betz 113-4 and n. 14; Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 103-5.

⁷⁸ Alternatively $\delta\iota'$ $\omicron\upsilon$ may refer to Christ but with no meaningful difference. Rightly, Betz 318.

⁷⁹ Within Galatians, 'the world' is the sphere of the flesh, 'the order of material creation and everything under its sway, independent of the control of the Holy Spirit'. Guthrie 150-51.

⁸⁰ So Tannehill, *Dying* (1967) 64; Fung 307; Witherington 450. Dunn 341 even changes the imagery into the mutual crucifixion of *Christ* and the world.

⁸¹ Martyn 564. See also Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 36 and many others.

With Paul crucified to the world, the latter cannot have anything to do with him.⁸² The crucified subject is different each time; the result is exactly the same: with one party gone, the relation between the two breaks up. That is, Paul here ‘uses the image of crucifixion to emphasize his own lethal separation from his previous, cherished and acknowledged identity’.⁸³

Secondly, context has to be considered. The immediate contrast is between Paul and the agitators, two competing ministers to the confused Galatians.⁸⁴ The statement is Paul’s *personal* manifesto, a depiction of his apostolic disposition polemically juxtaposed to the policy of his opponents, as the emphatic and contrastive ἐμοὶ δέ (v.14) makes clear.⁸⁵ That is, this is not an objective theological statement about the effect of the cross of Christ⁸⁶ but about Paul himself. This being so, it is clear that this statement does not apply to the agitators. For those who boast of flesh the world has not been crucified.⁸⁷ Though largely ignored, it is equally clear that the Galatians are not included either.⁸⁸ Indeed, there is a sense in which this manifesto is paradigmatic, in that it describes how the Christian existence *should* be.⁸⁹ Yet, given the Galatians ending with the flesh despite the vivid display of the Christ crucified (3:1, 3), it is hardly possible that Paul should intend to include the Galatians within this ‘I’

⁸² Cousar 151: ‘continuing presence of the world’.

⁸³ Martyn 564. See also Tannehill, *Dying* (1967) 63; Minear, ‘Crucified World’ (1979) 396.

⁸⁴ Cf. Witherington 449.

⁸⁵ This is widely noted. E.g., Burton 354; Ridderbos 224; Mußner 414; Fung 306. Cf. Longenecker 293.

⁸⁶ *Contra Vos, Eschatology* (1930) 48; Cousar 150-51; Fung 307. This reads too much theology into Paul’s crucifixion *metaphor*.

⁸⁷ See Weima, ‘Gal 6:11-18’ (1993) 93, 94-5 among others.

⁸⁸ *Contra* Tannehill, *Dying* (1967) 64; Mußner 414; Longenecker 295; Mell, *Neue Schöpfung* (1989) 293.

⁸⁹ Lyons, *Autobiography* (1985) 151-52 speaks of ‘the “formerly-new” contrast of redemptive history personalized in Paul’s self-description and made paradigmatic for the experience of every Christian’. Paul’s problem is that this paradigm is now *not* working with the Galatians.

statement. On the contrary, Paul's resolute manifesto of 'only the cross' serves as a criticism of their attraction to the policy of the agitators.⁹⁰

This manifesto is backed up by the following statement: οὔτε γὰρ περιτομή τί ἐστιν οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ καινὴ κτίσις (15). Given the lack of the specific term 'new age' in Paul, it is this motif of 'new creation' that scholars adduce as the strongest evidence for Paul's realized eschatology.⁹¹ In this respect, it is quite unfortunate that scholarly discussion of the passage is mainly focused on the thrust of this ambiguous concept itself (individual, communal or cosmological)⁹² without paying sufficient attention to the meaning *Paul* gives it in the context of his argument.

For Paul this 'new creation', whatever its original meaning may have been, functions as a 'rule' (τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ) or 'standard' according to which he has been conducting himself and according to which the Galatians are supposed to conduct themselves (στοιχήσουσιν).⁹³ As the rule to walk by, the standard of 'new creation' easily merges with the motif of the Spirit, according to which the Galatians are urged to walk: εἰ ζῶμεν πνεύματι, πνεύματι καὶ στοιχῶμεν (5:25).⁹⁴ Moreover, its

⁹⁰ Similarly, Paul also sets himself up against Peter with a view to criticizing the behaviour of the Galatians (2:15-21).

⁹¹ Cf. Jub 1:29; 4:26; 1 En 72:1 (cf. Isa 65:17; 66:22; Rev 21:1; 2 Pet 3:13; 1 En 91:16-17; 4 Ezra 7:75; 2 Bar 32:6; 44:11-12). As Keck, 'Apocalyptic' (1984) 236 puts it, 'While Paul never says that "the age to come" has arrived, he does speak of "new creation"'. See also Vos, 'Eschatological' (1912) 93-94; Stuhlmacher, 'Erwägungen' (1965) 2-3, 7-8; Mell, *Neue Schöpfung* (1989) 304, 324; Weima, 'Gal 6:11-18' (1993) 93, 100-101; Ortkemper, *Kreuz* (1967) 34; Baumgarten, *Apokalyptik* (1975) 169-70.

⁹² A good survey is available in Mell, *Neue Schöpfung* (1989) 9-32. As Reumann, *New Creation* (1973) 89-99 points out, the context lacks any cosmological note. Even granted the cosmological meaning, it cannot refer to the 'new age', since for Paul this cosmological renewal of the creation belongs to the future (1 Cor 7:31; 15:27-28; Rom 8:19-22; Phil 3:20-21). See Adams, *Constructing* (2000) 227 who, despite his own recognition of this, still opts for a quasi-cosmological, realized eschatological, reading.

⁹³ Guhrt and Link, *NIDNTT* 3:399-400. It is not the 'criterion of *salvation*' as Mell, *Neue Schöpfung* (1989) 317 asserts but the standard for *human conduct*. Cf. 1 Cl. 1:3; 7:2; 41:1.

⁹⁴ Matera, 'Culmination' (1988) 88.

parallelism with 'faith working itself out through love' in 5:6⁹⁵ makes Paul's *moral* use of the concept unmistakable.

Paul's concern here then is not the nature of the new creation itself but the disposition of the Galatians *vis-à-vis* this new creation. Whether individual, communal or cosmological, Paul's demand is that the Galatians should '*participate* in the new order of existence',⁹⁶ that is, they should conduct themselves according to this rule of 'new creation', and precisely this 'participation' is the problem Paul is presently concerned with.⁹⁷ Paul's demand is simple: 'Do not resort to the flesh (circumcision and uncircumcision) as the agitators do, but to the real means of justification, the 'new creation'! The unusual, conditional benediction⁹⁸ that follows makes it unmistakable: 'Peace and mercy to anyone who walk according to this rule' (6:16). Paul's barbed retort in v. 17 confirms that the Galatians are not doing very well in this respect, and this is why Paul has to utter this warning (cf. 1:6; 3:3-4; 4:12-20; 5:7).

Paul speaks of the mutual crucifixion between the world and himself to accentuate the absolute disjuncture between his own stance and the world-oriented disposition of the agitators, with the radical image of 'crucifixion' encapsulating his resolute refusal to compromise his unwavering orientation to the cross of Christ. Paul also employs the motif of 'new creation' to describe this life-disposition as the rule he has consistently been following, to which he now urges the wayward Galatians to return. Here Paul is not announcing 'the death of one world and the inauguration of another'.

⁹⁵ Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 37; Snodgrass, 'Justification' (1986) 86. Another parallel in 1 Cor 7:19 speaks of 'keeping God's commandment'. Despite the caveat by Drane, *Paul* (1975) 65 and Räisänen, *Law* (1983) 67, these parallels are the most immediate data for determining the thrust of the 'new creation' in Paul. Furnish, *Ethics* (1968) 201; Ridderbos, *Paul* (1975) 286.

⁹⁶ The phrase comes from Fung 308 with emphasis added.

⁹⁷ We demonstrated this in chapter two.

⁹⁸ As Betz 321 rightly notes, the condition 'implies a threat'.

Speaking of the ‘objective and eschatological’ reality occasioned by the cross of Christ is, therefore, missing the point.⁹⁹

Crucifixion of the flesh (5:24)

Paul also uses the crucifixion motif in 5:24. The context is Paul’s exhortation to the Galatians to follow the Spirit instead of the flesh (vv. 16-26): ‘Those who belong to Christ crucified (ἐσταύρωσαν) the flesh together with its passions and desires’ (v. 24). This negative statement is followed by a positive exhortation: ‘if we live by the Spirit, let us also conduct ourselves by the Spirit’ (v. 25).

As is widely noted,¹⁰⁰ now believers come in as the crucifying agents with the flesh as the crucified victim. Put in the aorist, the most likely reference of this crucifixion is what happens at conversion or baptism:¹⁰¹ ‘the decisive act taken at the beginning of their Christian experience’.¹⁰² Naturally, the primary focus falls on the action of believers. As Fung says, ‘in turning to Christ and becoming members of his body, they radically renounce fellowship with sin, whose seat is the flesh’.¹⁰³ Here too the intention is not difficult to see, namely, to highlight ‘a decisive separation from the Flesh, a separation so radical as to amount to the death of the Flesh’.¹⁰⁴

Yet, many interpreters want to go further. Speaking of crucifixion, it is argued, Paul posits a deliberate link between believers’ crucifying action and the crucifixion of Christ. For example, Fung remarks, ‘It is only on the basis of their spiritual participation in the historical crucifixion of Christ and by the Spirit’s power that

⁹⁹ Paul’s concern is the behaviour of the Galatians, not the death of Christ itself. In this sense, Paul’s use of crucifixion language stresses the fact that ‘dying with Christ needs to be worked out in the believer’s life’. Hooker, *Adam* (1990) 45 (see the whole chapter).

¹⁰⁰ E.g., Martyn 501; Barclay, *Obedying* (1988) 117; Tannerhill, *Dying* (1967) 61.

¹⁰¹ The difference between the two is immaterial.

¹⁰² Dunn 315.

¹⁰³ Fung 274.

¹⁰⁴ Martyn 501.

believers can hope to fulfill the ethical obligation to crucify the flesh with its passions and desires'.¹⁰⁵ Even when he speaks of believers' action, then, Paul still looks askance at the cross of Christ, thereby creating a 'mysterious blend of divine initiative and enabling, and human response and commitment'.¹⁰⁶ The talk then is as much about the cross of Christ as the action of believers at the conversion.

The effect of this blending is obvious: the eschatological decisiveness assigned to the cross of Christ is transferred to the crucifixion of believers. In effect, their crucifixion amounts to 'participation' in the crucifixion of Christ, which marks the eschatological defeat of the flesh.¹⁰⁷ Then, their crucifying of the flesh, referring to 'a completed action in the past' and stressing 'the finality of the act',¹⁰⁸ takes on the sense of a perfect: 'they have crucified' – a past event with present results or implications. This then is another case of the same crucifixion Paul speaks of in 2:20 and 6:14.¹⁰⁹

With the flesh clearly still alive (5:16-17), however, the tone has necessarily to be moderated. As Bligh says, 'in fact the perfect would not be appropriate, since the flesh once crucified does not remain crucified. The crucifixion has to be continued'. Thus he proposes to take this aorist as an "inceptive aorist" which signifies the commencement of an action which still goes on'.¹¹⁰ 'That victory is decisive, but it is paradoxically incomplete'.¹¹¹ With 'the past victory in baptism' now leading to 'the constant reenacting of that victory in the daily life of the community', we enter

¹⁰⁵ Fung 275. See also Tannerhill, *Dying* (1967) 62: '... it is only through Christ's crucifixion that men are able to crucify the flesh'. *Practically*, what does this statement mean?

¹⁰⁶ Dunn 315. See also Ortkemper, *Kreuz* (1967) 37.

¹⁰⁷ So Fung 275; Barrett, *Paul* (1994) 72; Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 65.

¹⁰⁸ Guthrie 41.

¹⁰⁹ So Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 166. Here Suhl, 'Galaterbrief' (1987) 3127 ruins his own insight gained in 2:20.

¹¹⁰ Bligh, *Greek* (1966) 205.

¹¹¹ Martyn 501.

familiar territory. This turns out to be yet another ‘instance of the famous Pauline “already” and “not yet”’.¹¹²

Questions do arise, however. First, why should the motif of crucifixion always be a reference to the cross of Christ? Of course, the imagery ultimately traces back to Christ’s crucifixion, but does it mean that Paul cannot use the image without referring to it (cf. Mt 16:24)? Here scholars seem to be squeezing Paul’s metaphor a bit too hard.

Secondly, combining believers’ crucifixion of the flesh with Christ’s cross to produce the paradoxical ‘already and not yet’ runs against the thrust of the context. As Lull rightly points out,¹¹³ this statement has to be read in relation to Paul’s exhortation in vv. 16-23, where the flesh, far from having being defeated, remains as powerful as ever. If Paul had intended to point out the ‘already and not yet’ nature of the flesh, he would have done it here, instead of drawing such an almost fatalistic picture. Paul’s concern here then is not the eschatological status of the flesh but the Galatians’ disposition *vis-à-vis* the flesh or the Spirit.¹¹⁴ Inevitably, therefore, the talk of ‘eschatological victory’ over the flesh creates undue tension, which in turn necessitates uncalled-for linguistic juggling.

Thirdly, Paul’s choice of word may not be insignificant here. This time he uses an aorist, unlike the perfect verbs he uses for himself (συνεσταύρωμαι, 2:20; ἑσταύρωται, 6:14). In the context of the crisis in which the Galatians are presently *allied with the flesh* (3:3; 4:8-11, 12-20; 5:7), this change is not difficult to understand: Paul cannot refer to their crucifixion of the flesh as a present reality

¹¹² Martyn 501; See also Ladd, *Theology* (1974) 474; Ridderbos, *Paul* (1975) 62-3; Dunn 315.

¹¹³ Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 115.

¹¹⁴ So Stott 150: ‘[i]t is not now a “dying” which we have experienced through union with Christ; it is rather a deliberate “putting to death”.... This is Paul’s graphic description of repentance, of turning our back on the old life of selfishness and sin, repudiating it finally and utterly’. See also Brandenburger, *NIDNTT* 1:401; Weder, *Kreuz* (1981) 199-200.

simply because that is not true. Of course, they, like Paul, crucified the flesh at the time of their conversion. However, while Paul always keeps the flesh (the law and the world) crucified, the Galatians are now reviving their crucified flesh, so to speak. And this is why Paul has to remind them of their *past* act of ‘crucifying the flesh’, to contrast it with their present allegiance with it (3:3).¹¹⁵

Thus far we have examined Paul’s use of the crucifixion motif. Twice he uses perfect verbs to depict his resolute and consistent disposition in the gospel, and once he uses an aorist to refer to the conversion of the Galatians. In both cases the motif accentuates the note of separation between life in Christ/faith and in the law/flesh. The purpose is, of course, to challenge the backsliding Galatians and encourage them to remain in or return to the truth of the gospel. The note of realized eschatology usually associated with the motif is a figment of scholars’ theological imagination.

Before we move on to a new section, let us briefly summarize the result of our discussion thus far. Since Christ already came and died on the cross, and since redemption from the curse of the law is inherently grounded on this past event, Paul’s appeal to the Christ event is, to a certain degree, necessarily retrospective. Yet, having examined the way Paul actually appeals to this pivotal event and his use of the crucifixion motif for that matter, it has become clear that the point Paul drives at is not its eschatological decisiveness or sufficiency which supposedly renders the law obsolete or superfluous. Rather, Paul’s interpretation of the Christ event is formulated in such a way that highlights the mutual incompatibility of Christ/faith and the law. And, as we saw in the preceding chapters, this thesis of incompatibility is presented in

¹¹⁵ In chapter two we noted how Paul reprimands the Galatians by contrasting their ‘running well’ in the *past* with their *present* deviation from the gospel. Paul does exactly the same thing here.

the context of the Galatians' quest for their ultimate salvation which is variously termed righteousness, inheritance, the Kingdom of God or eternal life. Paul certainly points to the past, but he does so with the specific purpose of rectifying the fatal mistake of his converts in the present, which is accomplished by pointing to its devastating consequence for their future destiny. It is not true therefore to say that 'the dominant temporal scheme of Galatians is then/now ... not now/yet-to-come'.¹¹⁶ Looking at the work of Christ, 'he looks at the future in the light of the past so as to see how to live in the present'.¹¹⁷

4. Christ and the Spirit

Apart from its polemical function discussed thus far, there is another important aspect of Paul's christological argument that needs to be examined, namely, its conspicuous emphasis on the role of the Spirit. Since Paul's main points are summed up as 'in Christ' and 'by faith', to clarify this point will prove crucial for a proper grasp of Paul's thought.

Christ living in me (2:20)

We begin with the statement in 2:20. Here Paul says that his present life in faith, in stark contrast to his former life under the law in which Paul himself (ἐγώ) was the subject of existence, has a completely new ground: 'Christ living in me'. As the foundation of Paul's new existence, 'Christ living in me' here seems to be an allusion to the Spirit, that is, the Spirit of his Son (4:6). As Fee perceptively suggests, the clause 'Christ lives in me' is 'a kind of shorthand for "Christ by his Spirit lives in

¹¹⁶ Williams, 'Promise' (1988) 711-12. The dominant contrast is the 'then' of 'running well' and the 'now' of apostasy. See n. 15 above.

¹¹⁷ We borrow the words from Goldingay, *Approaches* (1990) 122.

me””.¹¹⁸ This supposition is supported by the observation that it is typically the Spirit rather than Christ that is depicted by Paul as living or dwelling ‘in us’.¹¹⁹ It is this Christ-in-the-Spirit living in Paul that enables him to live in relation to God, which he could not do in his life under the law, and that is why he had to die to the law and take up faith in Christ. The idea of the Spirit is, however, not explicit at this point, and thus we move on to our next passage.

The crucified Christ and the Spirit (3:1-5)

Paul’s focus on the death of Christ continues in 3:1 (cf. 2:19-21). What concerns us at this point is the suggestive move from the crucified Christ (v. 1) to the Spirit (vv. 2-5).¹²⁰ That these two form a single argument is clear. Paul’s charge of foolishness (ἄνόητοι) in v. 1 corresponds to the equally rhetorical demand in v. 2 and more directly to οὕτως ἄνόητοί ἐστε in v. 3. Clearly, Paul brings in both Christ (v. 1) and the Galatians’ receiving the Spirit by faith (vv. 2-5) as *the* clincher of his claim of justification by faith.¹²¹

This connection has not yet been properly explained. Vos begs the question by asserting that Paul here brings in the *Tauftradition* in which participation in Christ’s death and the gift of the Spirit are combined as expressions of ‘das in der Taufe geschenkte Heil’.¹²² Fee’s claim that Paul appeals to the experience of the Spirit since the theological argument in v. 1 is not sufficient to ‘secure their allegiance to his

¹¹⁸ Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 374. He rightly remarks that it is only a matter of ‘emphasis in a given context’ whether Paul speaks of ‘indwelling Christ’ or ‘indwelling Spirit’.

¹¹⁹ So Longenecker 93; Duncan 72; Ridderbos 106; *Paul* (1975) 232; Conzelmann, *Outline* (1969) 209; Bruce, *Paul* (1977) 209.

¹²⁰ See Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 54-55. Most commentators pass over this move.

¹²¹ Rightly, Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982) 68; Longenecker 101; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 121. *Contra* Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 39-61; Stanley, ‘Curse’ (1990) 492-5.

¹²² Vos, *Pneumatologie* (1973) 87.

gospel'¹²³ is hardly satisfactory either. Considering that Paul begins with the crucified Christ (v. 1) but moves quickly to the Spirit which takes up Paul's *main* interest here (vv. 2-5), more probable is the supposition that Paul appeals to Christ crucified in order to speak of the Spirit. In other words, Paul here appeals to the crucified Christ as the exclusive source of the Spirit.¹²⁴

Paul's repeated emphasis on receiving the Spirit not ἐξ ἔργων νόμου but ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως confirms this interpretation (2-5). However we translate ἀκοὴ πίστεως,¹²⁵ its focus on the Christ crucified remains unchanged (3:1). That is, it is Paul's proclamation of the crucified Christ that constitutes the indispensable *Sitz-im-Leben* of the gift of the Spirit¹²⁶. It was by the 'message' of the crucified Christ,¹²⁷ or the Galatians' 'hearing' it,¹²⁸ that they received the Spirit. Inasmuch as faith means one's commitment to the crucified Christ (2:20), receiving the Spirit by faith is just another way of saying receiving the Spirit on the ground of the work of Christ. At least in this context then, both Christ and faith in him are seen in the light of their being the source of the Spirit.

Redemption from the law and the Spirit (3:14; 4:6)

Paul's emphasis on the Spirit in his christological argument is also visible in his deliberate association of Christ's redemptive work with the gift of the Spirit. In 3:10-14 Paul's argument ends with double ἵνα clauses, juxtaposing the blessing of Abraham and the promise of the Spirit as the dual purpose of Christ's redemption

¹²³ Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 382.

¹²⁴ Paul's focus on the Christ crucified was motivated by his desire to ground his converts' faith on 'God's power' which expresses itself in the activity of the Spirit. See 1 Cor 2:1-5.

¹²⁵ See the surveys in Hays, *Faith* (1983) 143-46 and Fung 131.

¹²⁶ Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 53-95; Cousar 66.

¹²⁷ So Hays, *Faith* (1983) 146-48; Fung 131-32; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 86-88; Martyn 284, 286-89.

¹²⁸ So Williams, 'Hearing' (1989) 82-93; Dunn 154-55; Witherington 212-13.

from the law's curse. Our concern here is the second clause about the Spirit. The argument in 3:10-14 forms part of the larger argument concerning the 'blessing' which began at 3:8. Thus Paul may well have stopped after 3:14a, which, as we have seen,¹²⁹ forms a perfect conclusion for the whole argument (3:6-3:14a). Yet, significantly, Paul adds another clause about the Spirit which seems quite obtrusive in its context,¹³⁰ and thereby makes a *deliberate* connection between Christ's work of liberation from the law and the coming of the Spirit. Led by a purpose-denoting conjunction (ὅτι), this remarkable clause claims that the Spirit is in fact the very *purpose* or the direct consequence of Christ's work of liberation.¹³¹

Paul does the same thing in 4:1-7. Again, Paul's reference to Christ's redemption from the law (v. 5) soon leads to the thought of the Spirit: 'God sent his Spirit into our heart, crying "Abba! Father!"' (v. 6). This time the link between Christ's redemption from the law and the coming of the Spirit is much more explicit than in 3:14. First, Paul uses the same 'sending formula' (ἐξαπέστειλεν) for both 'his Son' and 'the Spirit',¹³² indicating that the two are part of a single package. Secondly, he identifies the Spirit as 'the Spirit of His Son', with the clear implication that the coming of the Spirit is in fact not different from the coming of the Son himself. Here too this move is deliberate since Paul's argument does not require a reference to the Spirit.¹³³ The idea of redemption and adoption (v. 5) leads smoothly to the conclusion in v. 7. Yet the flow is 'diverted' and made to run through the experience of the Spirit. Paul's intention to lead his talk of Christ to the work of the Spirit is unmistakable.¹³⁴ As in 3:14, one has to note, Paul presents believers' sonship based on Christ's work of

¹²⁹ See 3.3.

¹³⁰ The Spirit is missing in 3:6-14, as Longenecker 123 observes.

¹³¹ Rightly, Kremer, *EDNT* 3:120.

¹³² So Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 402, 404-5; Martyn 391; Longenecker 173-74.

¹³³ Paul refers to the Spirit in 4:6 for the first time since 3:14.

¹³⁴ Rightly, Vos, 'Eschatological' (1912) 110.

redemption from the law as effective ground or *reason* for God's sending of the Spirit: '*Because* (ὅτι) you are sons, God sent his Spirit...' (v. 6). Once again, the work of Christ is understood in the light of the work of the Spirit.

Faith and the Spirit

Our observation above has another important corollary: Paul also presents faith in the light of the Spirit, that is, primarily as the source of the Spirit. This is hardly surprising since for Paul faith, referring to believers' commitment to the person of Christ, carries an intrinsically christological orientation.¹³⁵ We have already looked at 3:1-5, where Paul presents both the death of Christ and ἀκοή πίστεως as the only ground for the coming of the Spirit, and 3:14b, in which Paul reminds the Galatians that they have received the Spirit, the purpose of Christ's death, διὰ τῆς πίστεως. Just as the Galatians received the Spirit 'by faith', the blessing of justification comes to the Gentiles 'in Christ'.

The same thought seems present in 3:21-22, though it is not explicit. Here the contrast is between law and promise. Paul says that the law is not the source of righteousness because it does not have the 'power to give life'. This life-giving power belongs to the promise, which therefore is the exclusive source of righteousness. And in v. 22 Paul says that this promise comes ἐκ πίστεως. Here, as many interpreters note, the 'power to give life' is almost certainly an allusion to the Spirit,¹³⁶ making the

¹³⁵ So Donaldson, *Gentiles* (1997) 116-17; Räisänen, 'Break' (1985) 546. Faith, love and hope all refer to the single entity of believers' disposition. Paul speaks of faith to denote its christological orientation and love for its horizontal, ethical dimension. Seen in its eschatological dimension, this becomes 'perseverance of hope' (1 Thess 1:3). See n. 34 in chapter eight.

¹³⁶ Williams, 'Justification' (1987) 96-97; Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 65-69; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 398.

promise a functional equivalent of the Spirit. This then is practically the same as saying that the Spirit is 'by faith'.

Another case in point is πνεύματι ἐκ πίστεως in 5:5. Normally both are taken as two independent adverbial phrases, both describing the manner of eschatological waiting: 'through the Spirit' *and* 'by faith'. This is by no means an unnatural meaning, either exegetically or theologically. Yet in view of Paul's manifest concern to stress that the Spirit comes only 'by faith' (3:2-5, 14b, 21-22), it seems better to take ἐκ πίστεως as an adjectival phrase qualifying the immediately preceding πνεύματι, with the result of 'through the Spirit that comes from faith'.¹³⁷ As in the case of his appeal to Christ, Paul's emphasis on faith too is intended to bring out the crucial role of the Spirit.

It has become clear that Paul, by focusing on Christ and faith in him, in fact points to the importance of the Spirit that comes from *faith* in *Christ*. This means then that in Paul's talk of 'in Christ' and 'by faith' it is the Spirit that receives his ultimate emphasis. This is further confirmed by the way Paul develops his argument in 4:1-7 and 4:21-31. In 3:13-14 we have both the Christ event (v.13) and faith (v.14b) as the ground of the experience of the Spirit. In 4:1-7 the link between the Christ event and the coming of the Spirit remains the same, but now nothing is said about faith. Then, in his allegorical summary of his theological argument in 4:21-31,¹³⁸ we notice that the antithesis is now neither between law and Christ nor between law and faith but between law and Spirit. Both Christ and faith are prominent by their absence, while it

¹³⁷ So Chrysostom; Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 126; Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 152; Sloan, 'Law' (1991) 53; Haufe, 'Geistmotiv' (1994) 190. Cf. Burton 278.

¹³⁸ Major themes in Paul's argument converge here: slavery-freedom; law-promise; flesh-Spirit.

is the Spirit alone that effectively sustains Paul's antithetical argument.¹³⁹ Of course, that does not mean that Christ and faith are any less crucial for Paul's argument. It does show, however, where Paul's ultimate emphasis falls: the Spirit. Thus, Fee is right to observe that the ultimate antithesis in Paul's polemic against the law is between Spirit and flesh,¹⁴⁰ since both Christ and faith, which both stand in antithesis to the law, ultimately point to the work of the Spirit. *In short, in Galatians saying 'in Christ' and 'by faith' amounts to saying 'through the Spirit'.* Paul's christological emphasis turns out to be an emphasis on the crucial role of the Spirit.¹⁴¹

The Spirit as the key to Paul's argument

In the context where Paul deals with the questions of justification and inheritance, the implication of this emphasis on the Spirit is clear: justification and inheritance come only *through the Spirit*. Justification is available only 'in Christ' (2:17; 4:14a; 5:2-4) whose redemption from the law forms the foundation of the work of the Spirit (3:1-5, 14b; 4:6). Inevitably, it is also only 'by faith' (2:16-21; 3:11, 24) since it is faith that incorporates believers into the person of Christ (2:19-20; 3:26-28). By saying this, Paul's meaning then is that justification comes only through the Spirit. The point is succinctly expressed by Paul's own summary of his argument: ἡμεῖς γὰρ πνεύματι ἐκ πίστεως ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης ἀπεκδεχόμεθα (5:5). It is 'through the Spirit' that we, who seek to be justified 'in Christ' (2:17; cf. 5:2, 4, 6), are waiting for the hope of future righteousness, and this Spirit comes only 'from faith'. Here Paul's emphasis on

¹³⁹ Cf. Boers, *Justification* (1994) 66; Siker, *Disinheriting* (1991) 45.

¹⁴⁰ Rightly, Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 383. See also Duncan 80-81.

¹⁴¹ Crownfield, 'Singular' (1945) 498; Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 25; Barclay, *Obeying* (1988) 83; Longenecker 123; Witherington 211: '[t]he Spirit is at the heart of the matter and so plays a vital role in his acts of persuasion'. This is one of the central concern of Fee's study, *Empowering* (1995).

the role of the Spirit as the means of proper eschatological anticipation stands out quite impressively.¹⁴²

Needless to say, the same goes for ‘inheritance’. Inheritance is only ‘through promise’ (3:18, 29),¹⁴³ and this promise comes only ἐκ πίστεως (3:22). In 4:6-7 heirship to God’s promised inheritance is depicted as the function of the Spirit. In the allegory of 4:21-31 it becomes clear that ‘promise’ is in fact another (biblical) way of saying ‘the Spirit’ (28-29),¹⁴⁴ which is the indispensable qualification for participating in the inheritance (30). In the final analysis Paul’s thesis is simple: the Spirit is what ultimately matters because the Spirit is the only way to justification and inheritance. The precise meaning of this emphasis on the Spirit will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹⁴² Hamilton, *Spirit* (1957) 34. Unlike Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 417, the eschatological thrust is not a new element here.

¹⁴³ The actual phrases varies: ἐξ ἐπαγγελίας, δι’ ἐπαγγελίας (3:18a, b) and κατ’ ἐπαγγελίαν (3:29) without any significant change of meaning.

¹⁴⁴ See 5.3 above.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PAUL'S FUTURE ESCHATOLOGY AND THE GALATIAN CRISIS

The future eschatological thrust of Paul's argument in Galatians has become clear, and therefore the main task of this study is now accomplished. As we have just indicated, however, our thesis will not be complete unless we are able to show how Paul's future eschatological argument actually works as a response to the present crisis in Galatia. The purpose of this last chapter is, therefore, to make sense of Paul's future eschatological argument in the concrete context of the Galatian crisis. Three major issues are involved here. First, we shall inquire about the nature of the Galatian crisis. In chapter two we already identified the apostasy of the Galatians as the real problem with which Paul grapples. Now we need to ask further: in what sense does their behaviour constitute a case of apostasy? Our thesis in this section is that Paul speaks of apostasy because of the moral deviation of the Galatian converts, not because of certain doctrinal implications of circumcision and the law. Second, in line with this, we also need to clarify the thrust of Paul's emphasis on faith and the Spirit which we identified in chapter seven as characterizing Paul's theological response to the crisis. That is, what does Paul mean when he claims that future justification and inheritance can only come about 'through the Spirit'? Here we shall argue that the purpose of Paul's emphasis on the Spirit is not doctrinal but moral in both the theological and the ethical sections. This will in turn lead us to the issue of the nature of Pauline opposition in the Galatian churches. Paul's clear-cut moral concern throughout the letter leads us to suppose that moral rigour is not really part of the agitators' program. This claim runs, of course, against the usual reconstruction of the agitators' mission as a 'law-observant' one. In this section we shall argue that this

picture of a 'law-observant mission' cannot be reconstructed from the way Paul reports about them in Galatians. We shall take up these three questions one by one, after discussing the problems of the dominant way of construing Paul's argument in the letter.

1. Two arguments in Galatians?

Opinio communis

In current scholarship it is widely thought that Paul's argument in Galatians consists of two distinct, though related, sets of argument, one 'theological' and the other 'ethical'.¹ In this dual construal of Paul's argument, it is the theological, i.e., the doctrinal discussion in chapters three and four that forms Paul's main response to the crisis in Galatia with the ethical exhortation in chapters five and six either further qualifying/clarifying or supplementing this main argument. Scholars differ on how to relate the moral exhortation to the main, theological part of the letter,² but this distinction itself seems to be fairly well-established.³

On this view, the 'central' section, being 'theological', deals with the immediate crisis in Galatia which is essentially of dogmatic nature. The cause of the crisis is, of course, the Galatians' attempt to get themselves circumcised, and possibly, to take up the law. For Paul, however, for Gentile believers to receive circumcision means acknowledging the insufficiency of faith in/of Christ, and therefore, amounts to a flat denial of faith itself (cf. 2:21; 5:2-4).⁴ Not that there is any visible deterioration in the

¹ Barclay's scheme of 'identity' and 'pattern of behaviour' aptly captures the consensus.

² See the survey in Barclay, *Obedying* (1988) chapter 1.

³ This is true even for those who consider chapters 5-6 as the main part of Paul's argument. E.g., Choi, 'Spirit' (1998) 47-51.

⁴ According to Hooker, *Pauline Pieces* (1979) 25-27, the law, symbolizing 'the effort to achieve salvation by one's own effort', 'violates the logic of grace manifested in the death of

life of the Galatians, except that they are adding ‘works of the law’ to their existing ‘life in faith’.⁵ In Paul’s *dogmatic* reasoning, however, this very addition somehow⁶ means a denial of faith, despite the fact that their ‘life in the Spirit’ remains as vivid as ever, at least, in the opinion of the Galatians and the agitators.

Accordingly, Paul’s emphasis on the Spirit too is understood mainly in terms of its *doctrinal* significance: Paul focuses on the Spirit because it can serve as evidence of the realized nature of justification and inheritance, namely, as evidence of the eschatological superfluity of circumcision and the law (cf. 3:1-5, 14b). In a sense, it is the Galatians’ doctrinal ‘ignorance’ (3:1, 3) of the significance of the Spirit that causes them to turn to the law, and it is also this ignorance that Paul wants to rectify by highlighting its meaning as the fulfilment of God’s promise.

Here it is also widely assumed that the agitators require of the Galatians not only circumcision but also ‘observing the law’. This means that the agitators, keen on doing what the law commands, also show a strong moral sensitivity. Fighting against this morally-sensitive, law-upholding, theology of the agitators, then, Paul’s denunciation of ‘works of the law’ inevitably involves repudiation of moral effort (works) to keep the law seen as the denial of faith, with this faith now radically redefined as either ‘faith-as-trust’⁷ or ‘the faithfulness of Christ’⁸ to exclude any human endeavour within its purview.

Christ’. Betz 48; Mußner 54-55; Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 38-9; Dunn 40; Kruse, *Paul* (1996) 102-103; Wright, ‘Gospel’ (1994) 234. Hanson, ‘Paradigm’ (1994) 198.

⁵ Cousar 20. He expresses the idea as ‘icing on the cake’ (67).

⁶ With no explicit answer to this question in Paul, scholars suggests many different reasons for such decision. ‘Legalism’ is the traditional answer, but after E. P. Sanders, sociological and eschatological explanations become increasingly popular. See Introduction above.

⁷ Many interpreters think that Paul is redefining the traditional ‘faith-as-obedience’ (Sir 44:19-21; 1 Macc 2:52; Jub 17:15-18; CD 3:2; m. Abot 5:3) in terms of ‘faith-as-trust’. Betz 141; Fung 135; Dunn 161-62; Martyn 297-98; Witherington 225-26. If so, however, would he have said what he says in 5:6? His revision is certainly christological but not moral.

⁸ In this case, even (human) faith becomes irrelevant. For major proponents of this view, see chapter three n. 21.

If this is the case, it necessarily means that Paul's moral demand of 'walking by the Spirit' in chapters five and six cannot be considered as a direct response to the crisis caused by the agitators' law-upholding mission.⁹ For many interpreters it is Paul's anti-law polemic in the theological section that explains the inclusion of moral exhortation within his argument. For the agitators and the Galatians Paul's outright criticism of (observing) the law can certainly be taken as giving a blank check for moral libertinism. Hence, in order to prevent the possible (inevitable?) moral confusion or misunderstanding to which his polemic may give rise, Paul had to issue a strong warning, making it clear that by criticizing the law, he by no means compromises the importance of proper conduct. According to this view, then, Paul's exhortation becomes a 'warning' against a potential problem that may arise from his own argument in the earlier part of the letter.¹⁰

Other scholars perceive a real moral problem in Galatia, but then they attribute this problem not to the 'law-upholding' agitators but to Paul himself who supposedly failed to provide his Gentile converts with adequate practical moral provision comparable to the detailed moral directions in the Mosaic law.¹¹ For these interpreters, such moral confusion among the Galatians, visible even before the intrusion of the agitators provides a partial explanation for the willingness of the Galatians to open themselves up to the law-upholding mission of the agitators. In this case, Paul's moral

⁹ A notable exception is Howard, *Crisis* (1991) 11-14; Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 113-30; Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982) 164-92.

¹⁰ Besides commentaries, see Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 134; Eckstein, *Verheißung* (1996) 248-49; Schnabel, 'Developed' (1995) 270.

¹¹ Examples of those who posit a sort of moral deficit in Paul's gospel include Betz 273; Barclay, *Obeying* (1986) 60-74; Dunn 285; Gaventa, 'Singular' (1991) 157; Lategan, 'Developing' (1994) 321; Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul* (1996) 200; Williams 28; Martyn 19.

emphasis on the Spirit in this section primarily serves an apologetic function, 'defending' the moral efficacy of his Spirit-oriented gospel.¹²

Whether one understands Paul's moral exhortation as a warning or a defence, however, it remains unchanged that it cannot not belong to Paul's main response to the Galatian crisis itself caused by circumcision (and the law), and thus, one ends up having two distinct sets of argument with two very different points of emphasis.

Problems of the opinio communis

This dualistic construal of Paul's argument in terms of 'theology and ethics' raises a number of difficult questions in the flow of Paul's argument. First of all, Paul's response in 2:15-5:12 is hopelessly ineffective for a dogmatic argument. With flat disagreements over such critical issues as faith and law,¹³ and with the Galatians inclined to the wrong side, the vital thing for Paul to do to win them over is to demonstrate *why* his 'narrow' position should be the real gospel. As Sanders remarks, the view of the agitators is 'an entirely reasonable position' solidly based on the Scriptures,¹⁴ while Paul himself is something of a lone wolf. Under the circumstances, Paul's repeated charge of apostasy must have struck the others as nonsensical,¹⁵ unless he was able to convince them why it has to be so. Yet this crucial explanation is

¹² Scholars do not agree over the degree of moral uncertainty. Jewett, 'Agitators' (1971) 209: 'libertinism'; Betz 8-9, 273: 'flagrant misconduct'; Barclay, *Obedying* (1988) 106, 218: 'moral insecurity/confusion'; Ebeling, *Truth* (1985) 251: 'deep sense of insecurity'. On the other hand, Drane, *Paul* (1975) 8 and Longenecker, *Triumph* (1988) 80 n. 13 explain Paul's moral exhortation as 'a consequence of his own theological presentation', without postulating moral laxity on the Galatians' part. Still the apologetic thrust remains the same.

¹³ For the agitators and the Galatians presently under their auspices the law, far from nullifying faith, supplements and completes it. See Martyn, *Issues* (1998) 7-24, 141-56.

¹⁴ Sanders, *Law* (1983) 18. See also Räisänen, *Law* (1983) 183; Goulder, 'Pauline Epistles' (1987) 489: 'The counter commission has the Bible, the Church and reason entirely on its side'.

¹⁵ This is noted by Guthrie 61; Dunn 40; Anderson, *Rhetorical* (1996) 149.

precisely what we *lack*, as the diversity of scholarly opinion ironically confirms.¹⁶ It is not that Paul gives up on the Galatians; he is confident of persuading the Galatians back to his own gospel (5:10). Indeed, his matter-of-fact manner of throwing charges¹⁷ gives us the impression that he assumes that his accusation will make immediate sense to the Galatians. In other words, Paul must have a reasonable ground for such a confident denouncement of the behaviour of the Galatians.

Secondly, we should not miss the fact that Paul's language itself does not show any sign of dealing with two distinct issues. His concern with the law/circumcision, the immediate cause of the crisis, does not stop at the end of his theological argument but runs on right to the end of the letter (5:1-4, 14, 18, 23; 6:12-13, 15).¹⁸ More suggestive is Paul's consistent use of the Spirit-flesh antithesis to depict the crisis both in the theological (3:3; 4:21-31) *and* the ethical sections (5:16-26; 6:7-9). In fact, the heart of the present crisis lies in the fact that the Galatians are abandoning the Spirit and ending with the flesh (3:3), to which his demand that they should follow the Spirit instead of the flesh (5:16-18; 6:7-9) comes as a perfect answer. To be sure, many interpreters speak of two distinct uses of this single dualism, 'theological' (non-moral) and 'moral', limiting the flesh in 3:3 and 6:12-13 strictly to circumcised flesh.¹⁹ Why, however, do we need this artificial dichotomy of moral and non-moral when Paul himself does not show any intention of making such distinction? Granted a reference to circumcision,²⁰ Paul's use of the evocative 'flesh' instead of the more

¹⁶ For the agitators Paul's 'argument' is only a series of *non sequiturs* in variation. Thus, Sander, *Palestinian* (1977) 552; Howard, *Crisis* (1991) 52-53; Watson, *Paul* (1986) 64 are justified to fail to find any 'theological' ground for Paul's rejection of the law.

¹⁷ For this reason, T. Martin, 'Apostasy' (1995) 437-461 speaks of an apostasy to their former 'paganism'.

¹⁸ Thus, speaking of 'a real return to law-language' is misleading since it has always been Paul's central concern. *Contra* Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1981) 164, 200.

¹⁹ E.g., Burton 148; Barclay, *Obeying* (1988) 204; Hanson 80. But see Longenecker 239.

²⁰ Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 75 doubts such a reference.

neutral 'circumcision' would be hard, if not impossible, to understand, if he had meant to avoid the moral connotation the word normally delivers.²¹

Thirdly, and more seriously, this dualistic construal of Paul's argument creates an insuperable contradiction within Paul's polemic. The problem is simple: Paul's relentlessly moral claim that future salvation requires proper obedience (5:21; 6:7-9) contradicts his emphatic claim of 'justification by faith' as commonly understood. As we have seen, many scholars think that here Paul's main purpose is just to warn the Galatians of the danger of libertine behaviour. Even if this is the case, it only means that Paul carries out this task so effectively that he practically demolishes his own claim in the earlier part of his argument. As long as one subscribes to a doctrinal understanding of Paul's theological argument, this logical contradiction cannot be avoided.²²

Not surprisingly, there are attempts to ease the tension by turning Paul's explicit moral demand (imperative) into a sort of doctrinal discussion (indicative). Some scholars do so by taking Paul's conditional exhortation as a description of identity. For example, Fung interprets Paul's warning in 5:19-22 in this way: 'those who consistently behave in ways that are opposed to God's nature (cf. 1 Cor 6:9f.) show thereby that they have not accepted God's rule through Christ in their lives'.²³ This is not, however, what Paul says there. Paul never says that improper conduct evidences that one has never been a believer.²⁴ Even when Paul charges the Galatians of blatant apostasy (1:6; 3:3; 4:8-11; 5:7), he means a return to their former slavery and not their

²¹ See Keck, *Paul* (1989) 101; Frey, 'Antithese' (1999) 45 (68)-77. The effect of this deliberate association is widely noted. E.g., Cousar 67-68; Cassirer, *Grace* (1988) 39-40, 43.

²² This is highlighted by Jewett, 'Agitators' (1971) and Martin, *Foundations* (1986) 152-58.

²³ 261-62. See also Cole 164; Gundry, 'Grace' (1985) 11; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 443.

²⁴ The passage that suits Fung best would be 2 Cor 13:5. Even there, however, Paul's paraenetic purpose is clear: 'so that you may not do wrong'; 'that you may do what is right' (v. 7). Paul is not testing the authenticity of his converts' faith but motivating their improvement (v. 10).

having never come to God at all. Paul's intention is exhortation, not a theological discussion of who are in and who are out (cf. 1 Jn 2:19).²⁵

Another way of alleviating the tension is to consider Paul's ethical section as a defence of the Spirit's moral efficacy.²⁶ This view is not entirely misleading, since Paul's exhortation does presuppose his conviction about the superiority of the Spirit over the flesh, as is reflected on the strong promissory note of Paul's command in 5:16-18.²⁷ But this is a presupposition, not the main point of Paul's discourse here. Moreover, does Paul really think that the Spirit needs his *defence*? A more serious difficulty of this 'solution' is, of course, the actual situation in Galatia. With the Spirit apparently failing to produce its promised fruit for the Galatians, thereby precipitating their embrace of the law, would mere verbal affirmation of the Spirit's efficacy do any meaningful job for its defence?

Since Paul's moral demand as the non-negotiable condition for final salvation is so inexorable, any attempt to harmonize it with his supposed emphasis on the sufficiency of 'faith' does violence to the plain thrust of Paul's exhortation.²⁸ That is, as long as we posit a sort of doctrinal threat to faith caused by circumcision and the law in chapters three and four, Paul's moral demand leaves no real possibility of finding coherence between the two sections of his argument. The choice before us is thus simple: either Paul is juxtaposing two self-contradictory arguments side by side²⁹

²⁵ *Contra* Esler, *Galatians* (1998) 205-39.

²⁶ E.g., Betz 28-29; *idem*, 'Defense' (1979); Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 113-130; Barclay, *Obeying* (1988) 106-45; Gundry-Volf, *Perseverance* (1990) 141-54, 203-16.

²⁷ The construction οὐ μὴ τελέσητε carries this note. See BDF §365; Zerwick, *Greek* (1963) 149-50. Martyn 529; Barclay, *Obeying* (1988) 111; Burton 299; Merk, *Handeln* (1968) 71; Parsons 'Being' (1988) 242; Hanson, 'Conversion' (1997) 225.

²⁸ Spanje, *Inconsistency* (1999) 180-89 tries to resolve the 'inconsistency' between justification by faith and judgment by deed by saying that the latter is addressed to 'haughty self-assured Christians'. As long as both come from the same Paul, such a differentiation of audience does not really solve the problem of 'inconsistency'.

²⁹ Cf. Räisänen, *Law* (1983) 62.

or we have to turn the question the other way round. That is, despite its popularity, is it really clear that Paul's 'theological' argument in chapters three and four deals with a doctrinal issue?

2. *The moral crisis in Galatia*

Bearing these problems in mind, we shall argue in this section that the Galatian crisis is primarily a moral one. This conclusion no doubt is based on the observation that Paul himself responds to the crisis essentially in moral terms, which is the immediate concern of our inquiry here. Our thesis about the future eschatological nature of Paul's theological argument thus far already anticipates this conclusion; our task here is to bring this to the surface.

Circumcision as a moral problem

The obvious starting point is Paul's treatment of circumcision, the issue *par excellence* in the present crisis in Galatia.³⁰ On a dogmatic view of the issue, as already noted, circumcision poses a threat to the gospel due to its 'doctrinal' implication as a denial of faith. Under the circumstances, resisting the lure of circumcision should not only be the necessary but also the *sufficient* solution to the problem, at least for the present crisis. In the words of Mauer: '[i]n Galatien dreht sich alles um einen einzigen Punkt, um die Frage der Beschneidung. *Ihre Annahme oder Ablehnung* ist das Bekenntnis, durch das man sich für das Gesetz oder für die Gnade...entscheidet'.³¹

³⁰ So Burton 272; Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 31-71; Boers, *Justification* (1994) 62-65; 70-71. Circumcision, as Barclay, *Obedience* (1988) 45-46 puts it, is 'one fact which is incontrovertible', and therefore, forms 'a secure base from which to analyse the Galatian crisis'.

³¹ Mauer 151 cited from Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 40 (emphasis added).

Is this, however, the way Paul actually treats the matter? Paul's unequivocal prohibition in 5:4 seems to suggest this very thing. We should read further, however. Having warned the Galatians of the danger of circumcision, Paul surprises us by stating that 'in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail but only faith working through love' (5:6). This way of putting the matter is by no means an accidental misrepresentation, since he reiterates precisely the same point at the end of the letter: 'for neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!' (6:15)

The importance of these statements is clear: in a letter designed to impress on the Galatians the absolute necessity of avoiding circumcision, Paul places both circumcision *and* uncircumcision together under the same negative column of 'of no avail'.³² For one thing, this makes it clear that remaining uncircumcised is not the real answer Paul has in mind; the latter is as unsatisfactory as the former in defining one's faith. This then falsifies the common view that for Paul circumcision constitutes a doctrinal denial of faith, and thus its refusal has to be the affirmation of one's faith. Circumcision is clearly of no use, but so is uncircumcision. That is, the real problem Paul detects in Galatia runs much deeper than the question of circumcision *per se*.

According to Paul's own affirmation, the *only* thing that matters is 'faith working itself out through love' (5:5) or a 'new creation' (6:14),³³ which constitutes the heart of the 'truth' (5:7) or 'rule' (6:16) to which the Galatians have to conform. Here both 'faith and love' and the rule of 'new creation' clearly come into the picture as alternatives or solutions to the problem of circumcision. What we need to note here is the fact that these alternatives to circumcision and uncircumcision are *moral* entities.

³² See Williams 138. Cf. Martyn 472.

³³ See 7.3 above.

Faith as the antithesis of circumcision is familiar. What is significant at this point is Paul's definition of faith in terms of love, something becoming active (ἐνεργουμένη)³⁴ through love. Love is, of course, 'the synopsis of Christian life',³⁵ which represents the gist of Paul's exhortation to 'walk according to the Spirit' in chapters five and six. We have also observed the close parallelism between the 'new creation' and the Spirit as the standard of Christian conduct (6:14-15; 5:25).³⁶

Does this then mean that Paul gives a moral answer (faith-love) to a doctrinal problem (denial of grace/circumcision)? Is this the first crack of an opening through which Paul is to sneak in 'the whole law'? Indeed, most interpreters read this statement as if it were Paul's attempt to 'clarify' or 'qualify' his own earlier statement on 'faith'.³⁷ This change of thrust is, however, not visible in the text.³⁸ Clearly, both 'faith working itself out through love' and the 'new creation' are presented not as a (moral) consequence of (justifying) faith³⁹ but as the definition of faith, namely, as the alternative to the problem of circumcision itself (5:2, 4, 6).⁴⁰ That is, this is just another case of the *same* antithesis between law and faith which colours the whole of his 'theological' argument. After all, as is widely acknowledged, these statements

³⁴ For the thrust of this participle, see Mulka, 'Fides' (1966) 174-88; Furnish, *Love Command* (1972) 97; Bligh, *Greek* (1966) 193; Mußner 353-54. However we construe the participle, the *actual convergence* of faith and love remains the same. Clearly, both refer to different *aspects* of believers' disposition which is *indivisible*. For this reason Paul can freely refer to the disposition of the Thessalonians either as 'work of faith', 'labour of love' or 'perseverance of hope' (1:3; 5:8): faith (3:2, 5, 7, 10); faith and love (3:6); love (3:12). Also see Phil 2:15-17 in which Paul defines 'the sacrifice and service of your faith' in clearly ethical terms..

³⁵ Williams 143. He says that for Paul faith denotes the 'vertical' and love the 'horizontal' aspect of Christian life.

³⁶ See 7.3 above.

³⁷ So most scholars, e.g., Williams 138; Fung 230; Cousar 117. This is analogous to the tendency to consider 2:19-20 as the ethical defence of Paul's argument of justification by faith instead of considering it as part of the argument itself.

³⁸ Cf. Crownfield, 'Singular' (1945) 492: 'Surely he would have made it clear that he was turning from one misunderstanding to its polar opposite'.

³⁹ *Contra* Longenecker 229 who considers v. 6b as an addition to v. 6a.

⁴⁰ Cf. Morris, 'Faith' (1993) 290: 'we must not take Paul's emphasis on faith to mean that he is doing away with the importance of obedience'. The only way to heed to this caveat will be

occur at the clinching points of his argument.⁴¹ That is, it is 'faith and love' as a *single* entity that forms the solution to the crisis of circumcision (5:2, 4, 6). The 'relational turn'⁴² at this point is rightly noted, but it is equally true that this 'relational turn' is made as the answer to the very question of circumcision.

If Paul himself defines faith in terms of love (5:6) and demands it of his Gentile converts (5:13-14), Paul's emphasis on faith necessarily involves a demand of the pattern of behaviour through which it expresses itself, namely, the pattern of 'love' (2:19-20; 5:5-6). In other words, Paul's polemic against circumcision is from the first more moral than doctrinal.

Paul's real problem with the Galatians is not that they want to receive circumcision but that they, in so doing, are neglecting their life of 'faith and love' and the pattern of the 'new creation' which Paul considers as the only thing that counts. Of course, circumcision does pose a serious threat to faith. This is not, however, because Paul's thinking is 'controlled by a deeper logic'⁴³ but simply because it causes the Galatians to deviate from the pattern of faith and love.⁴⁴ It is for this reason that uncircumcision, which is as useless as circumcision, can never be an adequate

to acknowledge the ethical nature of faith itself. Thus Luther's distinction between 'the faith that justifies' and 'a faith that includes love' does not work at this point.

⁴¹ On 5:6 see Burton 279; Longenecker 229; Dunn 260-61; Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 39; Becker, *Paulus* (1998) 290; Johnson, *Writings* (1986) 312. On 6:12-16 see Minear, 'Crucified World' (1979) 398; Weima, 'Gal. 6.11-18' (1993) and references there.

⁴² Russell, 'Redemptive' (1995) 338. Betz 22 thinks that v. 5 is a 'summary of doctrine of justification' and v. 6 of 'doctrine of the church'. This 'turn' is, of course, becoming explicit what is implicit, and not the new introduction of a moral logic into a doctrinal argument.

⁴³ Hooker, *Pauline* (1979) 25.

⁴⁴ Dogmatically, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any relevance to the definition of 'faith' and 'new creation'. In the Galatian situation, however, circumcision seems to be propagated in such a way that causes the Galatians to neglect what is really important, i.e., their faith working itself through love. In this particular situation, then, circumcision, an *adiaphoron* otherwise, does become a threat to faith, and that is why Paul denounces circumcision as he does in 5:4. Thus in Romans where no such problem is visible, Paul can soberly present circumcision as the 'seal' of justification, not its threat.

answer to the crisis caused by circumcision. The crisis in Galatia is a moral one; so is the solution that Paul suggests to the Galatians.

The Law as a moral problem

Interestingly, Paul's argument does not remain with such local issues as circumcision and calendar observances. Rather, Paul considers circumcision as an inseparable part of 'the whole law' (5:3), and launches a serious polemic against the law *in general* (3:19-25; 4:21-31; 5:4). At first glance this might give the impression that Paul's argument cannot be a moral one, since he is fighting against the very law, 'the epitome of morality'. However, a sober look at his treatment of the subject⁴⁵ confirms his moral perspective. In a nutshell, Paul's criticism of the law is focused on its *moral impotence*, its incapability to make those who belong to it actually carry out its own requirements. His criticism of the agitators too is not aimed at their rigorous effort to observe the (whole) law but their *failure* to do so (6:12-13; 5:3).⁴⁶ That is, Paul is not criticizing the actual *observance* of the law.

An instructive case in point is Paul's promissory statement that the Galatians 'are not under the law' if they are led by the Spirit' (5:18). Strangely, most interpreters fail to capture the real point of this statement by reading the idea of superfluity into Paul's language: the Galatians 'do not *need* to be under the law', since 'the Spirit provides all the necessary guidance in the fight against the flesh'.⁴⁷ This is not, however, the plain sense of Paul's words. What he actually says is that those who are led by the

⁴⁵ The literature on Paul's view of the law is enormous. For surveys, Barclay, 'Observations' (1985) 5-15; Westerholm, *Law* (1988) 1-105; Moo, 'Paul and the Law' (1987) 287-307; Thielman, *From Plight* (1989) 1-27; *idem*, *Law* (1994) 14-47; Hong, *Law* (1993) 11-15; Schreiner, *Law* (1993) 12-31 with a substantial bibliography (253-272).

⁴⁶ Longenecker, 'Until Christ' (1999) 93-100 convincingly demonstrates the intentional convergence of Paul's portrait of the agitators and 'works of the flesh' listed in 5:19-21.

⁴⁷ Betz 281 and Barclay, *Obedience* (1988) 116 respectively. See also Gundry-Volf, *Perseverance* (1990) 152; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 438.

Spirit *are* not under the law. Reversing the statement, the Galatians will end up being under the law if they, as they are doing now, continue to forsake the Spirit.

At this point, it is important to realize the pregnant meaning of 'being under the law' in Paul's argument. For Paul, it means nothing other than being under its *curse* (3:10), imprisoned under sin (3:22-23) and enslaved under the flesh (4:3, 9, 21-31).⁴⁸ Thus Paul's point is that the Galatians are not under the curse of the law only if they walk according to the Spirit.⁴⁹ Here too, as in 5:6, following the Spirit and bearing its fruit stands as the only effective solution to the problem of the flesh and the consequent curse of the law. That is, for Paul the danger of the Galatians' attraction to circumcision/law lies in the fact that they are thereby entangled into the deadly pattern of 'works of the flesh' whose end is nothing but curse and eternal destruction.

Two further points support this conclusion. First, Paul deliberately links the law with the flesh in an inexorable dualism. After what Paul says in 3:3 and especially 4:21-31, where the law and flesh are virtually synonymous, the implication of the moral explication of the same dualism in 5:16-26 and 6:7-9 is unmistakable.⁵⁰ In 5:16-18 too the intentional interchange between 'gratifying the desire of the flesh' and 'being under the law' is beyond doubt.⁵¹ Secondly, the phrase ἔργα σαρκός, in view of the close association between law and flesh (3:3; 5:16-18), is probably a deliberate allusion to ἔργα νόμου.⁵² In effect, Paul seems to be saying that life under the law, necessarily interlocked with the force of the flesh, only produces 'works of the flesh'.

⁴⁸ Rightly, Hong, *Law* (1993) 61, 149-69, 184; Schreiner, *Law* (1993) 77-81; Hanson 172; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 392.

⁴⁹ Rightly, Ladd, 'Spirit' (1975) 216; Vos, *Pneumatologie* (1973) 30.

⁵⁰ So Howard, *Crisis* (1991) 12-14; Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 114-116; Barclay, *Obeying* (1988) 210; Thomson, *Chiasmus* (1995) 136-139.

⁵¹ So Mußner 378; Sloan, 'Law' (1991) 49; Hong, *Law* (1993) 165; Martyn 496.

⁵² Rightly, Ebeling, *Truth* (1985) 258; Dunn 301; Longenecker 252-53; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 441; Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 74-78.

In fact, this moral critique of the law is not limited to the ethical section. As early as in 2:19 Paul claims that 'life under the law' does not allow any life in relation to God. This is why he had to die and adopt a new 'pattern of life' in faith (v. 20).⁵³ Precisely the same idea is reiterated later in a generalized statement: the law does not have the power to give life (3:21), a claim that contradicts the cherished convictions of Judaism concerning the life-giving role of the law.⁵⁴ That this conclusion involves a moral judgment⁵⁵ is clear from the way Paul describes the real function of the law in moral terms: it was given only as a jailer dealing with 'sin' (3:19). Whether it refers to its preventive role or aggravating effect,⁵⁶ the fact remains unchanged that the only thing it can do is to shut everything 'under sin' (3:22). Since the law pronounces curse upon those who fail to carry out its demand, this is in reality another way of saying 'under curse' (3:10).⁵⁷ It is the law's *lack* of moral power to overcome human flesh that Paul wants to hammer home with his 'polemic' against the law.⁵⁸ This is the *irony* of 'belonging to the law'. Thus, Paul's emphatic claim that the Spirit is never from the law (3:2-5),⁵⁹ is an essentially moral criticism of the law since only the life-giving power of the Spirit (Rom 8:11; 1Cor 15:45. Cf. John 6:63) can enable the believers to fulfil the law which is summed up in its demand of love (cf. Rom 8:1-4).⁶⁰ This is

⁵³ 2:19-20, the summary of Paul's ethics, forecasts the full-blown discussion in chapters 5-6. E.g., Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982) 78. Does this not belie the neat theology/ethics division?

⁵⁴ See n. 61 in chapter seven.

⁵⁵ Thus, 'making one alive' involves moral renewal. Rightly Ridderbos 141; Drane, *Paul* (1975) 24, 154 n. 52. *Contra* Byrne, *Sons* (1979) 162 n. 103.

⁵⁶ Paul's moral polemic seems to point to the negative effect of the law.

⁵⁷ So Wilckens, *Rechtfertigung* (1974) 92; Sloan, 'Law' (1991) 35-60.

⁵⁸ This is noted by Howard, *Crisis* (1991) 11-14; Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 113-130; Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982) 164-192; Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 119-122, 134-142; Schreiner, 'Perfect Obedience' (1985) 254-278; Wilckens, *Rechtfertigung* (1974) 77-109; Hanson, *Abraham* (1988) 150-154; Hooker, *Adam* (1990) 61.

⁵⁹ The law's inability to give the Spirit is highlighted by Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 39-86.

⁶⁰ Lohse, *Ethics* (1991) 163.

what Paul means by his suggestive expression 'the law of Christ'.⁶¹ Longenecker nicely sums up the moral nature of the Galatian crisis:

The recommendation that Christians should observe the law was not, in Paul's view, simply a *cognitive* error in need of a theological corrective. Instead, it opened the way for Christians to be pawns of superhuman influences other than that of the Spirit of God. At stake, in Paul's mind, is *Christian character enlivened by the Spirit* and evidenced within human relationships.⁶²

That Paul responds to the problem of circumcision/the law with an essentially moral argument suggests that as far as Paul is concerned, the crisis in Galatia is a moral one: the Galatians' deviation from the Spirit-inspired pattern of faith and love caused by their hollow enthusiasm for circumcision and the law. And this is what he means when he charges the Galatians of apostasy (1:6) and of *abandoning the Spirit* for the flesh (3:3). It is this deplorable situation in which the Galatians are backsliding from their life in the Spirit that explains why Paul has to make the Spirit as the central point of his argument.

3. Paul's moral emphasis on the Spirit

In the preceding chapters we argued that Paul perceives the crisis in Galatia primarily in the light of its implication for the Galatians' quest for final salvation, the ultimate goal of their coming to Christ. In the light of the moral nature of the crisis, then, Paul's criticism is clear: by deviating from their life in the Spirit, and thereby

⁶¹ Scholarly discussion mostly concerns its relation to Mosaic law and Jesus tradition. Dodd, 'ENNOMOS CHRISTOU' (1968); Davies, *Torah* (1952) 92-93 and *Rabbinic* (1970) 111-146; Schürmann, 'Gesetz des Christus' (1974); Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation* (1986) 110-133; Martyn 554-558; *idem*, *Issues* (1997) 235-49. See the surveys and further literature in Barclay, *Obedience* (1988) 125-145; Hong, *Law* (1993) 173-183.

⁶² 'Until Christ' (1999) 106. See also his *Triumph* (1998) in which he strongly emphasizes the moral thrust of Paul's argument, though we disagree with his realized eschatological viewpoint.

exposing themselves to the threat of the flesh which the law has no power to overcome, the Galatians are in effect putting their hope of future salvation at serious risk.

This is immediately clear in the ethical section of the letter in which Paul's exhortation to the Galatians forms a virtual exposition of the function of the Spirit in Christian life. According to what Paul says there, the Spirit is not so much evidence of realized salvation as a mode or power of new life which enables believers to attain to the hoped-for salvation. Here, by the Spirit Paul means 'life in the Spirit', and thus, the *moral* thrust of Paul's argument stands out unmistakably. The burden of this section is to show that this moral logic is equally crucial for Paul's theological argument about justification and inheritance.

Justification and 'faith working itself out through love' (5:5-6)

The moral thrust of Paul's argument of 'justification by faith' becomes clearest in 5:2-6 in which he sums up his whole argument on the subject. In antithesis to the dead end of 'justification by the law' (5:2-4), Paul presents before the Galatians the real alternative: ἡμεῖς γὰρ πνεύματι ἐκ πίστεως ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης ἀπεκδεχόμεθα (v. 5). The moral thrust of v. 6 has already been explained. Our concern at this point is that Paul presents this moral notion of 'faith working itself out through love' (v. 6) as the only answer to the question of justification (v. 5): 'we are waiting for the hope of righteousness by the Spirit which comes from faith, *for* in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any power but only faith working through love'.

Scholars usually overlook its connection with the preceding statement on justification.⁶³ Even when it is acknowledged, the future eschatological thrust is

⁶³ See, e.g., Witherington 370. Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) never touches v. 5.

mostly left out.⁶⁴ On the assumption of realized justification, however, this severance results in the virtual reversal of Paul's perspective, turning the statement of hope into 'an excellent description of [present] righteousness in Christ'.⁶⁵ Barclay speaks of 'the stark alternatives of the two ways of life', but for him too its eschatological context remains irrelevant. Surprisingly, even 'the hope of righteousness' to be awaited is taken to be one of the 'benefits' of *present* identity, 'the distinguishing marks of the true Abrahamic covenant as it is *fulfilled* in Christ'.⁶⁶ He cannot, of course, ignore the eschatological motif completely, and admits the presence of the motif of the final judgement, which is, however, already 'partially anticipated in the justification'.⁶⁷

To grasp the point Paul drives at, it seems quite crucial to give ἰσχύει in v. 6 its full meaning: 'be capable of', 'have the power to do something' (cf. Phil 4:13; Lk 13:24; Jas 5:16).⁶⁸ Typical renderings of the word such as 'to be of no avail' or 'to matter'⁶⁹ ignore this basic motif of power in it and thereby obscure the meaning of Paul's statement. In the present context in which Paul speaks of two different ways of attaining to the 'hope of righteousness' (vv. 4-5), it takes on the meaning of 'to be capable of leading one to eschatological righteousness'.⁷⁰ It is not simply that circumcision and uncircumcision 'do not matter' or are 'irrelevant' for those who are

⁶⁴ So Fung 228; Matera 189; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 419-420.

⁶⁵ Ziesler, *Righteousness* (1972) 179. See also Bornkamm, *Paul* (1975) 153. For Ziesler, it provides support for his claim that for Paul righteousness is both 'forensic' and 'ethical', for this verse 'implies a new being as well as a new standing'. His talk of 'first fruit' is rightly criticized by Reumann, *Righteousness* (1982) 58.

⁶⁶ *Obeying* (1988) 93 (emphasis added). See also 94, 216-220, 223.

⁶⁷ *Obeying* (1988) 101. Similarly, Weder, *Kreuz* (1981) 193-5; Glasswell, *EDNT* 1:407. We do *not* deny the identity-making function of hope in the present; what we deny is the assertion that this is the *primary* thrust of the passage. The issue is justification and it remains a hope. See the perceptive comment of Bonnington, 'Review' (1999) 149-50.

⁶⁸ So Louw/Nida 677; Paulsen, *EDNT* 2:208. The notion of religious distinction is not in view here. *Contra* Hanson 157 and Martyn 472-73.

⁶⁹ So Barclay, *Obeying* (1988) 93; Ziesler, *Righteousness* (1972) 179; Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 63, 82; Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 43; Fung 228.

⁷⁰ Betz 263 n. 94; Mußner 351-52: 'das Hoffnungsgut der Gerechtigkeit zu bringen vermag'.

already justified.⁷¹ Paul's specific claim is that these things are *impotent*, that is, incapable of leading the Galatians to the hoped-for righteousness (cf. 3:21). Receiving circumcision itself, just as remaining uncircumcised, does not help at all in the Galatians' quest for justification. It is only 'faith working itself out through love' that has the power to bring about justification. This is why believers are to await the hope of righteousness 'through the Spirit' since 'faith working itself through love' is the very function of the Spirit.⁷²

So here, by defining 'through the Spirit' and 'by faith' in terms of love, Paul is in effect claims that the life of love sustained by the Spirit is the only mode of waiting for the hope of righteousness.⁷³ When Paul seizes upon the Spirit as the only means of justification (5:5), he is then primarily thinking of his *moral* function (5:6). For Paul the Spirit constitutes the sure proof of 'justification by faith', not because he signifies the present reality of justification but because it enables believers to maintain the life of love which is the *sine qua non* for reaching future justification.⁷⁴ As Cosgrove puts it, 'Paul understands life in the Spirit as the precondition of authentic ethical engagement, the ultimate justification of which remains future'.⁷⁵

⁷¹ *Contra* Bultmann, 'Ethic' (1924) 214; Kertelge, *Rechtfertigung* (1966) 149. Unlike Gundry-Volf, *Perseverance* (1990) 207, Ridderbos, *Paul* (1975) 179 and Ziesler, *Pauline* (1990) 116, the context, dealing with 'justification', is clearly soteriological (5:5).

⁷² Merk, *Handeln* (1968) 71: 'Die Liebe ist „tatsächlich nichts anderes als das Leben im Geist.“' See also Schnabel, 'Ethics' (1992) 272.

⁷³ Betz 264: '[n]othing but this love is the basis of the Christian eschatological hope (5:25-6:10)'.

⁷⁴ Sanders, *Palestinian* (1977) 516 is misleading to speak of 'salvation by grace' and 'punishment and reward by deeds'. Interestingly, First Clement, who affirms Paul's doctrine of justification by faith (5:7; 32:3-4), interprets Genesis 15:5-6 as James does (10:1-7; 30:3!; 31:2). Did this author, far closer to Paul than we, and Luther for that matter, really misunderstand the apostle?

⁷⁵ Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988) 150. For him, however, justification is not the issue, and thus this recognition remains inconsequential to Paul's main argument.

If, as most interpreters acknowledge, this sums up Paul's whole argument in the letter,⁷⁶ it follows that *throughout his argument* Paul's emphasis on faith as the only way to justification in fact presupposes its morally active nature. That is, Paul's argument that (future) justification comes only by faith is from the first a *moral* argument. And this is a most appropriate point to highlight in the situation in which Paul's converts are showing signs of deviation from this all-important pattern of faith and love.

Inheritance and life in the Spirit (5:16-26)

Just as life in the Spirit forms the *sine qua non* for receiving future justification, it is also the only means of receiving God's promised inheritance. In his allegory of Sarah and Hagar couched in the characteristic Spirit-flesh dualism, Paul makes it clear that only those born of the Spirit will participate in God's inheritance, while those born of the flesh will be expelled from this community of children of promise. The theme of inheritance continues in Paul's exhortation in 5:16-26, with the inheritance now specified as the future Kingdom of God (v. 21b).⁷⁷ Paul's demand in this passage is simple: 'walk according to the Spirit' (vv. 16, 18). V. 17 strengthens the force of Paul's demand by accentuating the inexorable conflict between Spirit and flesh:⁷⁸ one either follows the Spirit or the flesh; there is no third option.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ See n. 41 above.

⁷⁷ For justification of taking the two passages together, see 6.4.

⁷⁸ This passage is difficult. See the survey in Barclay, *Obeying* (1988) 112-15. Mußner 377-78 thinks that the Spirit and the flesh neutralize each other so as to create 'freedom of choice' for believers. Paul presupposes human freedom, but the negative thrust of v. 17b renders his view unlikely. Betz 278-81 takes the passage as a case of (unpauline!) fatalism, which flies in the face of Paul's unmistakable confidence in the superiority of the Spirit reflected in vv. 16 and 18.

⁷⁹ So most interpreters, e.g., Burton 302; Barclay, *Obeying* (1988) 114-5; Longenecker 246; Fee, *Empowering* (1994) 434-47; B. Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 70.

The dualistic perspective has already been made clear in 3:3 and 4:21-31; now its *moral* texture comes to the fore.⁸⁰ The antithesis between Spirit and flesh is not just a matter of passive belonging (identity); it requires active decision on one's behaviour. Being born of the Spirit means actually *walking* (περιπατεῖτε, v. 16; στοιχῶμεν, v. 25) by the Spirit and being born of the flesh in fact means *gratifying* (τελέσητε, v. 16) the desires of the flesh.

Paul's point here is that only by 'walking in the Spirit' will the Galatians be able to avoid gratifying the desires of the flesh (v. 16) and doing its works (vv. 19-21)⁸¹ which is a sure way of disqualifying oneself from the inheritance of God's future Kingdom. Though not expressed, the other side of the story is equally clear: only by following the Spirit, and thereby producing 'the fruit of the Spirit',⁸² will the Galatians be able to participate in this promised inheritance.⁸³ Here too, Paul presents life in the Spirit as the indispensable condition for receiving future salvation.⁸⁴ Paul's claim that inheritance comes from the Spirit (4:7, 21-31) is from the first a moral argument.

Paul's argument in Galatians, both the theological and the ethical, therefore shows a very clear moral logic. His problem with the Galatians is their deviation from their life in the Spirit (3:3). Since for Paul this pattern of life in the Spirit constitutes the *sine qua non* for participating in future salvation (justification, inheritance, the Kingdom of God and eternal life), their deviation from the Spirit can only mean that

⁸⁰ Rightly, Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 70; Barrett, *Freedom* (1985) 46.

⁸¹ Paul presupposes the superior power of the Spirit over the flesh as is implied by the strong promissory note in v. 16b (οὐ μὴ τελέσητε). See BDF §365; Zerwick, *Greek* (1963) 149-50. Martyn 529; Barclay, *Obedying* (1988) 111; Merk, *Handeln* (1968) 71; Parsons 'Being' (1988) 242.

⁸² See W. Barclay, *Flesh* (1962); Barclay, *Obedying* (1988) 106-215; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 439-54.

⁸³ Rightly, Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 175; Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 443.

⁸⁴ See Hester, *Inheritance* (1968) 86; Yinger, *Judgment* (1999) 247; Watson, *Paul* (1986) 64; Hanson 177; Hamilton, *Eschatology* (1957) 21-23.

they are foolishly jeopardizing their hope of this salvation. Hence the desperate call to these wayward Galatians: ‘walk according to the Spirit!’

Seen in this way, Paul’s moral exhortation in chapters five and six is not just a confusing or even potentially self-contradictory qualification of his ‘main, theological’ emphasis on faith-as-trust but *the continuation of his consistent moral polemic against the apostatizing behaviour of the Galatians*. His extensive argument in chapters three and four does provide crucial ‘theological’ groundwork for his demand, hammering home on the Galatians the fact that their *future salvation* is available only in the Spirit. Yet, as we have seen thus far, this theological logic aims at the Galatians’ deviation from this Spirit and therefore already carries a strong *moral logic* within it, which only becomes *explicit* in the later part of the letter. In the final analysis, it is this demand that the Galatians should remain in or return to their life in the Spirit that constitutes the major purpose of Paul’s writing this letter. In this sense, we can indeed call the ethical section the ‘culmination’ and ‘climax’ of Paul’s response to the crisis in Galatia.⁸⁵ In conclusion, Galatians as a whole is therefore Paul’s coherent response to the singular problem of the apostasy of the Galatians, which comes out quite clearly once we recognize the essentially future eschatological and moral character of Paul’s perspective.

⁸⁵ In this respect, Cosgrove, *Cross* (1988); Fee, *Empowering* (1995) 367-471; Witherington 193, 217 and Choi, ‘Spirit’ (1998) 16 and *psssim* are closer to our view, though their realized eschatological interpretations of the ‘theological’ section differ from ours. The claim of Matera, ‘Culmination’ (1988) that chapter 5-6 is the ‘culmination’ of the letter is somewhat misleading, since for him the real culmination occurs in 5:1-12 and 6:11-18 and *not* the ethical section proper which still remains secondary.

4. Paul's opponents in Galatia

With our exposition of Paul's argument completed, we are now in a position to say a few word about the nature of the agitators' mission in Galatia.⁸⁶ Though much about their activity inevitably remains obscure, our study does make one thing clear: in view of the inherently moral thrust of Paul's polemic against them, the *moral* observance of the law is not part of their agenda. They certainly demanded circumcision (5:2-3; 6:12-13) and probably the Jewish calendar, too (4:10). We do not have any evidence in Galatians, however, that the agitators' demand involves a rigorous moral concern, at least not a successful one. Paul's description of them actually runs in the opposite direction.

Paul's moral polemic

That Paul is not fighting against a law-observant, that is, morally rigorous, mission can be shown by the fact that such a hypothesis creates an insoluble contradiction in the flow of Paul's argument. The problem is simple. In chapters five and six Paul *demand*s with utmost seriousness (part of) what he himself has categorically *rejected* in earlier chapters.⁸⁷ The 'tension' between these two seemingly contradictory thrusts of the letter is well captured by Barrett:

Paul's criteria are neither doctrinal nor institutional, but the transformation of life in love. Even so, however, his position is a difficult one for there may be *little observable difference* between the fruit of the Spirit and works of law. He is obliged to walk on a knife edge between the alternatives of flinging away the moral content of Christianity and the conversion of it into a new legal system.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ What is the starting point for other scholars is therefore the end result of exegesis for us.

⁸⁷ Cf. Ropes, *Singular* (1929) 22-24; Crownfield, 'Singular' (1945). However, this does not support the two-front theory either, as far as one section cancels out the other.

⁸⁸ Barrett, *Freedom* (1985) 46 (emphasis added); Barclay, *Obeying* (1988) 140-45.

In Dunn's words, 'Paul is thus engaged in a delicate art of trying to have his cake and eat it, that is, trying to retain some emphasis of the law while dispensing with others'.⁸⁹ Here interpreters faces an unavoidable question: in what sense does his 'Pneuma-Ethik' differ from the 'Tora-Ethik' he criticizes?⁹⁰ In Paul's own language, what distinguishes his law of Christ from the law of Moses?

Many solutions are proffered. Hübner's attempt to distinguish between 'all the law' (5:3) and 'the whole law' (5:14) is rightly discarded.⁹¹ Also not uncommon is the distinction between 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' obedience or 'inner' and 'external' obedience.⁹² Another popular view is to differentiate 'doing' the law from 'fulfilling' it, with the latter taken in the sense of 'eschatological fulfilment'.⁹³ This linguistically and contextually subtle⁹⁴ solution, however, is based on a misreading of Paul's statement which does *not* speak of an 'eschatological fulfilment' of the law in terms of Spirit-inspired love.⁹⁵ Paul speaks of 'fulfilment' but it is not the Spirit but the 'one word' (ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ) of the love commandment within the Mosaic law itself (Lev

⁸⁹ Dunn, *Theology* (1993) 116.

⁹⁰ These terms come from Mußner 364.

⁹¹ Hübner, *Law* (1984) 36-41. See the critique in Barclay, *Obedying* (1988) 136-37. Cf. Hong, *Law* (1993) 172.

⁹² E.g., Furnish, *Ethics* (1968) 188-194; Hübner, *Law* (1984) 37; Dunn, *Theology* (1993) 111-14. Similarly, Moule, 'Obligation' (1967) 389-406: 'obedience as self-righteousness' vs. 'obedience as faith'. The talk of 'moralism' is also common as in Houlden, *Ethics* (1973) 34; Schlier, *TDNT* 2:497; Cousar 67; Schweizer, 'Lasterkataloge' (1975) 467. Even Snodgrass, 'Justification' (1986) 72-93 falls into a similar trap: 'obedience based on works righteousness' vs. 'saving obedience in response to God's grace'. If I, as one justified in Christ, am zealous to obey God's will in view of God's final justification, is it an expression of 'works righteousness' or 'saving response' to God's grace?

⁹³ Examples include Betz 275; Longenecker 242-43; Matera 197; Westerholm, *Law* (1988) 201-5; Barclay, *Obedying* (1988) 135-145; Hong, *Law* (1993) 177-183; Hanson, 'Conversion' (1997) 230; B. Longenecker, 'Defining' (1996) 91-93; *idem*, *Triumph* (1998) 83-88.

⁹⁴ Thielman, *Law* (1994) 140. It is suggestive that Barclay ends up appealing to the notion of *ambiguity*. *Obedying* (1988) 140, 142-5.

⁹⁵ Cf. Russell, 'Redemptive' (1995) 341. Even as a moral defence, this would be too dangerous a statement to make, if Paul's intention is to banish the law completely out of sight. As Romans 6 aptly illustrates, Paul has his own way of expounding the moral nature of his gospel without making any reference to the law. Why then, in this critical situation, would he run the risk of making his moral demand in the name of the law? So Bandstra, 'Recent Developments' (1990) 259-60 (against Westerholm).

19:18!) that fulfils ‘the whole law’ (ὁ ... πᾶς νόμος). To be precise, it is not even that the whole law ‘is fulfilled’, either presently or gnomically; it comes to us already fulfilled (πεπλήρωται).⁹⁶ Paul is simply urging the Galatians to practice the love command in which the whole law stands fulfilled.

Most of all, however, this sort of linguistic juggling⁹⁷ fails to make any *practical* sense. However one interprets Paul’s language, it does not change the brutal fact that the love Paul demands as the heart of his ethics is precisely the same love required by the Mosaic law, that is, part of what he has urged the Galatians to reject. It is Paul himself who says that love, the concrete working-out of faith (5:6), is the gist of the very law (5:13-14). That is, Paul *does* take up ‘the moral standards of the law’. Therefore, if we construe Paul’s argument as a doctrinal objection to the observance of the law including its ‘Tora-Ethik’, the conclusion is inevitable: Paul is contradicting himself.⁹⁸

This conclusion is, however, an unsolicited one. If Paul does have a ‘deeply-ingrained impulse to maintain a place for the law within his understanding of the gospel’,⁹⁹ it is absurd to imagine that Paul would disparage the *ethic* of Torah in the first place. It is Paul who highlights the absolute importance of obedience in the name of the law (5:13-14), and it necessitates the conclusion that moral observance of the law is not part of his opponents’ agenda.

⁹⁶ In effect, this amounts to ‘summed up’. So Furnish, *Ethics* (1968) 200 and *Command* (1972) 97; Schlier, *TDNT* 3:681; Schrage, *Ethics* (1988) 206-207. *Contra* Martyn, ‘Crucial Event’ (1996) 48-61 who attempts to explain this ‘fulfilment/perfection’ as an act of Christ.

⁹⁷ It is an irony that scholarly discussion of Paul’s ethics is often too theoretical and dialectical to follow. Fine theoretical explanations abound; *practical* implications are often difficult to see.

⁹⁸ Cf. Ropes, *Singular* (1929) 24.

⁹⁹ B. Longenecker, ‘Defining’ (1996) 91-94 (here 94).

The agitators are not observing the law (6:12-13)

This accords nicely with what Paul says about the agitators. According to Paul's report in 6:12-13, they want (θέλουσιν), and indeed compel (ἀναγκάζουσιν), the Galatians to be circumcised. Yet Paul also criticizes them that 'they themselves are not keeping the law'. This is a criticism Paul cannot afford to make if the agitators are actually law-observant. This statement therefore strongly suggest that these people are not really concerned with 'keeping the law', while being very anxious to get the Galatians circumcised.

In scholarly reconstruction of the Galatians situation, however, this verse is frequently played down for various reasons. For some this remark does not necessarily contradict the law-observant character of Paul's opponents since it only reflects Paul's former, (Pharisaic) legal standard,¹⁰⁰ or his conviction that no one can keep the whole law.¹⁰¹ This is unlikely, however. Paul may well have such belief but it does not obviate the conspicuous gap between 'not keeping the law' and 'not keeping the whole law' (5:3 and 5:14; cf. 3:10). According to Jewett, Paul makes this accusation because 'they annulled grace and rest on their boasting', and thereby 'denied and perverted the truth of the gospel which the law itself affirmed'.¹⁰² However, this reads too much into Paul's language. The way Paul speaks makes it clear that Paul accuses them on their own ground. Howard asserts that this accusation of Paul rather confirms that the Galatians believed the contrary, and that Paul's charge only refers to their association with the uncircumcized Gentiles, which supposedly constitutes a breach of the law.¹⁰³ In view of their strong demand of

¹⁰⁰ So Howard, *Crisis* (1991) 15-16; Longenecker 293; Witherington 449.

¹⁰¹ So Hanson, *Abraham* (1988) 119; Schreiner, *Law* (1993) 64-5.

¹⁰² 'Agitators' (1971) 201-2.

¹⁰³ So Howard, *Crisis* (1991) 15-16. Cf. Sanders, *Law* (1983) 23.

‘ritualistic’ elements of the law such as circumcision and the calendar regulations, however, this is very unlikely. As Esler notes,¹⁰⁴ Paul’s talk of ‘keeping the law’ most probably refers to its ethical dimensions.

More frequently, scholars explain away this statement by appealing to its polemical nature. For example, Barclay, taking these verses as an ‘exaggerated polemic point’, turns Paul’s word completely upside down: ‘Paul’s snide remark that they do not really keep the law does not disprove but rather, paradoxically, confirms our impression from the rest of the letter that the agitators expected the Galatians to observe the law in conjunction with their circumcision.’¹⁰⁵ For him Paul’s statement is a groundless slander aimed to ‘show up his opponents in the worst possible light with the hope of weaning the Galatians away from them’.¹⁰⁶ This suggestion is intriguing, especially in view of Barclay’s recognition that

If he was attempting to persuade the Galatians to abandon the ‘other gospel’, what he says about it must have been both *recognizable and plausible in their ears*. Thus the letter is likely to reflect fairly accurately what Paul saw to be the main points at issue.¹⁰⁷

Barclay is too sweeping here. It seems fair to say that Paul’s talk of their motivation ‘*merely* to avoid persecution’ needs a grain of salt. But he is not necessarily throwing a slander when he speaks of their ‘boasting in the flesh’. If they concentrate their attention on circumcision in particular, Paul’s statement can be a fair depiction of their activity.

¹⁰⁴ Esler, *Galatians* (1998) 183-4.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Mirror-reading’ (1987) 87; *Obeying* (1988) 64-5 (here 85).

¹⁰⁶ ‘Mirror reading’ (1987) 75. Already Räisänen, *Paul* (1983) 96; Watson, *Paul* (1986) 62. See also Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 32-3; Smiles, *Gospel* (1998) 191.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Mirror reading’ (1987) 76.

On Paul's remark about them 'not keeping the law', Barclay misses the point completely. If the agitators are presently launching a law-observant mission, it means that the Galatians are now witnessing to their strenuous zeal to obey the law. Under the circumstances, such a groundless *ad hominem* slander, instead of helping him 'weaning the Galatians away from them', would have been a kiss of death for him by damaging his own personal integrity.¹⁰⁸ Are we to believe that Paul is so naive as not to anticipate such a result? That this statement concerns the 'character' and 'motivation' does not exempt it from the need of being 'plausible'.¹⁰⁹ In a highly polemical and critical situation, one is required to pay more meticulous attention not to misrepresent one's opponents, even their character and motivation, because a slight slip on that point could easily destroy one's whole case by damaging one's own *ethos*.¹¹⁰ A polemic may well be 'evaluative' but it will have its intended effect only in so far as its 'descriptive' makes sense to the hearers.¹¹¹

The easy tone of Paul's remark can best be explained as the reference to the clearly selective disposition of the agitators, highlighting certain elements of the law, while neglecting others.¹¹² Instructively, Martyn comments on this verse that the 'Teachers' are 'allowing themselves a ... flexibility' of practising certain parts of the law, 'while leaving aside numerous other parts' and yet 'being nevertheless

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Williams 25.

¹⁰⁹ See the (self-contradicting) admission of Martyn 563. The reservation of Longenecker 293 and Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 34-5 is thus misleading. Cf. Mußner 413-4.

¹¹⁰ In a personal conversation, Dr. Barclay pointed out that among ancient authors such practice was a commonplace, of which Josephus is an excellent example. But such tactic of personal slander presupposes effective control of information about the victim criticized, a privilege Paul does not have. Given a strong bond with his converts, such an *ad hominem* tactic will work very powerfully as in Philippians 3:2 ('dogs'; 'evil workers'; 'mutilators') and 3:18-19 ('enemies of the cross'). But having lost their affection and become their 'enemy' (4:16), and especially with his opponents as the Galatians' new frame of reference, such a tactic will do more harm than good, unless it makes sense in their ears. Whatever Paul says about the agitators, they would gauge it against the real agitators they are observing.

¹¹¹ The 'evaluative-descriptive' antithesis of Hanson, *Abraham* (1988) 191 is a false one.

¹¹² Crownfield, 'Singular' (1945) 493, 497 without taking his claim of 'syncretists'.

convinced *in their own minds* that they are fully observant of the Law'.¹¹³ In Paul's mind, however, 'they are not keeping the law'.

Observing the whole law (5:3)

This conclusion is supported by Paul's statement in 5:3. In this verse, Paul warns the Galatians: 'Once more, I, Paul, say to each of you who are circumcised that you are obliged to keep the whole law!' The impression is that they are not presently intending to observe the whole law, which in turn implies that they have not been taught to do so.

Naturally, those who posit a 'law-observant mission' in Galatia try to weaken the force of this statement. Howard suggests that Paul's point in this statement is that circumcision makes one a debtor (ὀφειλέτης), namely, a slave to the law, with the 'whole' expressing the severity of such servitude.¹¹⁴ Yet, 'obligation' is a far cry from 'slavery'; Paul would have explicitly said 'slavery' if he had meant it, instead of making such an ambiguous remark.

A more typical solution is that of Kümmel: 'Paul did not try to inform the Galatians with a fact new to them in 5:3 but to remind them again (πάλιν) of a known fact to which they had not paid sufficient notice'.¹¹⁵ If so, one must ask, how would his readers have responded? Their immediate answer would be: 'Oh, yes, thank you for reminding us. Well, in fact, that's exactly what we are told to do and are trying to do'. What then would the argumentative force of this remark be? If Paul really wants to 'hammer home their full unpalatable implications',¹¹⁶ he would have made clear

¹¹³ 563 (italics added).

¹¹⁴ *Crisis* (1991) 16.

¹¹⁵ *Introduction* (1975) 300, followed by Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971) 41-42; Barclay, *Obedying* (1988) 64; Fung 222; Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998) 30-33.

¹¹⁶ Barclay, 'Mirror-reading' (1987) 75.

why they are so ‘unpalatable’. Simply rehearsing the agitators’ own point without clarifying what he is up to seems to be a very unusual way of ‘hammering home’ his real point. Or, is the thought expressed, which most interpreters take to be a Jewish commonplace (cf. M. Abot 2.1; 4.2; 4 Macc. 5.20-21; Sir 7:8; 1QS), so difficult for the Gentiles to grasp as to require such a solemn declaration by Paul? If the agitators had been concerned to impose ‘the total observance of the law’ on the Galatians, would such a notion not be the first thing they would have learned from them? Does not their willingness to take up circumcision, the last and hardest step in the proselytization,¹¹⁷ indicate that they, if taught, would have been fully conscious of the need to keep the whole law? The plausibility of the Galatians’ ‘naivete’ or ‘insufficient realization’ is more apparent than real.

In order for this statement to have its intended warning effect, it must be either that the agitators had not made the point clear (the agitators are being selective), or the Galatians are resisting their demands except for circumcision and calendar regulations (the Galatians are being selective). Since the latter clearly runs against the impression we get in the letter (cf. 1:6; 3:1; 4:12-20; 5:7-8),¹¹⁸ the only viable option seems to be that the agitators themselves are selective in their demands. Thus even Martyn, whose ‘Teachers’ are thoroughly law-observant, concedes that they are extending ‘indulgence’ to the Galatians in their demand.¹¹⁹ This means, then, the construct of ‘law-observant’ mission is from the first a mistaken one, as is illustrated by the glaring self-contradiction in the readings of those who champion such a view,

¹¹⁷ According to Philo, circumcision is the most repugnant of all Jewish laws (*Spec.* 1.1-11).

¹¹⁸ Their willingness even to receive circumcision means that they are prepared to go all the way in the law, if they are required to do so.

¹¹⁹ 470. This is widely noted. Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982) 64, 87, 160, 193; Jewitt, ‘Agitators’ (1971) 207-8; Sanders, *Law* (1983) 29. See further references in Barclay, *Obedying* (1988) 62 n. 75.

especially with their interpretation of 3:10!¹²⁰ Paul's statements in 5:3 and 6:13 necessitate the conclusion that the agitators are not law-observant in the proper sense; the law as a moral guidance is not part of their agenda.¹²¹ It is Paul, not the agitators, who brings in 'the whole law' into the discussion.¹²² In short, the 'law-observant mission' cannot be reconstructed from the text of Galatians.¹²³

Paul and the agitators

Since circumcision signifies the initiation into the Jewish community,¹²⁴ the agitators are in effect teaching that salvation is only available for the Jews. What the agitators believe is, then, the salvation-historical privilege of the Jews based on God's special, covenant relationship with them. It is then nothing other than their 'Erwählungsbewußtsein' as God's people (cf. 2:15; 5:6; 6:15) or as descendants of Abraham (3-4) that they resorted to as the guarantee of their participation in God's eschatological salvation (cf. Jubilee 15:26).¹²⁵ Since it is not one's ethical performance but the salvation-historical privilege that becomes crucial for one's

¹²⁰ Longenecker, commenting on 3:10, says that 'Undoubtedly the Judaizers *had quoted* this passage [Deut 27:26] as being decisive'. Then commenting on 5:3, he remarks: 'The fact that Paul here points out that circumcision obliges one to keep all of the prescriptions of the Mosaic law implies that the Judaizers *had not yet mentioned this*'. Similarly, Martyn takes Deut 27:26 quoted in 3:10 as 'the Teachers' own text' and remarks, 'One supposes that it was with such scriptural passages that they *threatened and frightened* the Galatians'. Then at 5:3 he retreats, 'Perhaps the Teachers are extending a[n] ... indulgence to the Galatian Gentiles, *failing* to require that they observe every commandment' (470). Barclay, *Obedying* (1988) 64 and 67 falls into the same trap. Equally unintelligible is Mußner's assertion (348) that the agitators taught the soteriological necessity of observing the law without informing the Galatians that circumcision entails the need to keep the whole law. In different context, Brinsmead says that the opponents are only focusing on circumcision and other ritualistic laws, while still considering themselves as 'an ethical movement'. *Dialogical* (1982) 177.

¹²¹ Similarly, Vielhauer, 'Gesetzesdienst' (1975) 545.

¹²² Rightly, Brinsmead, *Dialogical* (1982) 87; Kertelge, 'Gesetz' (1984) 384.

¹²³ It is possible that the agitators may have their own system of ethics. What is crucial to note, however, is that *for Paul* it can never be an authentic ethical provision. For him genuine obedience with love at its centre is possible only through the Spirit and he denies this privilege of the Spirit to those under the law.

¹²⁴ See n. 93 in chapter two.

¹²⁵ Cf. Lull, *Spirit* (1980) 172.

salvation, it is not difficult to understand why they exhibit relative indifference to moral questions.

In contrast to these agitators who rely on God's grace of election without paying sufficient attention to God's relentless moral demand as the condition of final salvation, Paul presents an inherently moral polemic by emphasizing the indispensability of 'ending with the Spirit', namely, the pattern of 'walking by the Spirit'. Paul's criticism is that the Galatians, persuaded by a sort of empty enthusiasm, begin to compromise what is never to be compromised, namely, 'faith working through love' (5:6), which Paul posits as the only 'truth of the gospel' (5:7). For Paul, this means that they are now 'ending with the flesh' (3:3), and this is nothing but an act of giving up the only track leading to their salvation. Hence, such a desperate call for a return to the life of 'walking according to the Spirit'.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Thus Paul's argument in Galatians parallels his similar polemic against 'the Jews' in Romans 2. For this frequently misinterpreted passage, see especially Watson, *Paul* (1986) 109-22 and Snodgrass, 'Justification' (1986) 72-93. A good historical analogy of Paul's moral critique of complacent reliance of God's grace of election is the stinging criticism by John the Baptist of those who rely on their being 'children of Abraham' as giving a sure immunity to the impending wrath, i.e., as automatically guaranteeing their future salvation (Lk 3:7-8; Mt 3:7-9). Similar perspective seem to lie behind such passages as Mt 21:33-44 (43!); John 8:37-41; Ps. Sol. 18:4; M. Abot 5.19. See Bruce, *Fulfilled* (1978) 61-64.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to demonstrate the fundamentally future eschatological perspective of Paul's argument in Galatians. Refuting the widespread reading of the letter in terms of realized eschatology on the one hand, and demonstrating Paul's future eschatological concern on the other, the study has presented a rather unconventional interpretation of Paul's argument in Galatians. Although summaries are provided at the end of each chapter, it seems useful to gather up main points of the study together at this point.

1. Summary of the present study

1. Focusing on what Paul himself explicitly says about the crisis in Galatia instead of hazarding a hypothetical reconstruction of it, two important points have been made about the context of Paul's argument. First, the problem that Paul deals with in Galatians is the apostatizing behaviour of the Galatians, not with the erroneous theology of the agitators. That is, the letter is not a record of Paul's theological debate with his rival missionaries but a pastoral letter in which he rebukes the Galatians for their deviation from the truth of the gospel and exhorts them to return to it. Secondly, the way Paul deals with the problem indicates that Paul attempts to dissuade the Galatians from the present backsliding by highlighting the fatal consequence such behaviour entails for their future. This makes us expect that Paul's theological argument too, as part of his response to the crisis, is framed in a similar, future-oriented perspective instead of a realized eschatology.

2. In line with this, our main concern has been to clarify the fundamentally future eschatological thrust of Paul's theological argument. We have done so by demonstrating that the subject matter of Paul's theological argument is future eschatological salvation and not what has already been realized through the Christ event.

First, justification, the central issue in Galatians in the light of which Paul perceives the significance of the present crisis, does not refer to a present reality in Christ but the final justification at the Judgment, a point which is further confirmed by a comparison with the data in Romans.

Secondly, unlike the widely held view, sonship is not the main issue in Galatia. An analysis of such motifs as 'sons of Abraham', 'seed of Abraham' and 'sons of God' indicates that they are all median motifs employed to accentuate Paul's main points which are either justification (3:6-9) or the heirship of believers (3:15-29; 4:1-7, 21-31).

Thirdly, we have also argued that the notion of a 'fulfilled Abrahamic promise' is a mistaken one. This thesis is based on a number of exegetical revisions. 1) The argument in 3:6-14 (blessing) is distinct from that in 3:15-29 (the promise). 2) 'The promise of the Spirit' (3:14) does not signify the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise. 3) The Abrahamic promise of the land is yet to be fulfilled. God gave Abraham the promise, and Christ-Seed, as a co-recipient of the same promise, mediates it to those who become seed by believing in him.

Fourthly, and naturally, the inheritance, the major subject of Paul's scriptural argument (3:15-29; 4:21-31), also refers to an inheritance in the future. Refuting the notion of 'realized inheritance', we have argued that the motif of 'inheriting the Kingdom of God' (and eternal life) is related to the Abrahamic promise of the land,

thereby making the 'inheritance' another epithet for final salvation together with the 'Kingdom of God' and 'eternal life'. The notion of future inheritance therefore also converges with justification, another name for the same final salvation.

Paul's claim throughout the argument is therefore that one can attain to eschatological salvation (justification, inheritance, Kingdom of God, eternal life) only by faith, namely, only by remaining in Christ.

3. Accordingly, contrary to the widespread assumption, Paul's christological argument does not show a structure of realized eschatology. Paul's singular purpose is to dissuade the Galatians from taking up the law by impressing on the Galatians its utter incompatibility with their commitment to Christ. In each subsection of his christological argument (3:10-14; 3:15-29; 4:1-7) Paul repeats this critical point, but each time with a different argument which he justifies by exploiting a different aspect of the Christ event. Paul's application of the crucifixion motifs to himself (2:19-20; 6:14) and to the Galatians (5:24) is also guided by his desire to drive a wedge between the law and faith in Christ.

Together with this, we have also shown that Paul presents the Christ event, and faith in him for that matter, as the source of the Spirit which forms the ultimate foundation of Paul's argument. This makes Paul's christological argument an essentially Spirit-centred one. That is, by claiming that justification/inheritance is only 'in Christ' and 'by faith', Paul is in fact telling the Galatians that they will attain to it only by remaining 'in the Spirit'.

4. Paul's emphasis on the Spirit is basically a moral emphasis. That the Galatians will reach future salvation 'through the Spirit' in fact means that they will receive

their final salvation only by 'walking according to the Spirit' instead of the flesh. Not surprisingly, therefore, Paul understands the crisis in Galatia primarily in moral terms. The real problem does not lie in circumcision itself but its making the Galatians deviate from the truth of the gospel, the pattern of 'faith working itself out through love' and the standard of 'new creation', which can be summed up as 'life in the Spirit'. Naturally, Paul's polemic against circumcision/law too is moral, focusing on its inability to produce a genuine pattern of behaviour, which in Paul's opinion is only possible in the Spirit. This also leads us to suspect that the mission of the agitators is not a 'law-observant' one in the sense of being morally sensitive.

All in all, Paul's demand is that the Galatians should remain in or return to the lifestyle of faith and love sustained by the Spirit. Our main thesis has been that Paul makes this appeal not by stressing what the Galatians already have in Christ but by warning them of the inescapable eschatological consequence of their present deviation from the life in the Spirit. Abandoning the Spirit for the sake of the flesh, Paul says, will put their future in jeopardy: their justification, the promised inheritance, the kingdom of God and eternal life; in short, their eschatological salvation itself, the ultimate goal of their coming to Christ.

2. Implications for Pauline study

The present study represents a plea for a reassessment of Paul's eschatological perspective in Galatians. Inevitably it also asks for a reevaluation of the place of ethics in Paul's gospel. Since much of the result of our study goes against the grain of current Pauline scholarship, it will also be useful to draw briefly a few points together on these key issues.

Pauline eschatology

Though our thesis only concerns eschatology in Galatians, it also carries significant implications for the study of Paul's eschatology as a whole. This is all the more so since Galatians is frequently considered as the clearest example of Paul's realized eschatological outlook. For example, Marshall contends, '[w]e can also see in Paul's writings ... that the parousia or future coming of Jesus occupies a secondary place compared with other aspects of his person and work. For example, it is insignificant in Galatians'. This in turn serves to consolidate the impression that '[t]he center of gravity in Paul's theology lies in the past and not in the future, although the future hope is one pole of the context for Christian living now'. Even when it is acknowledged that 'Paul works within the horizon of the future coming of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom of God, and for him this is a living hope', the final word tends to run in the opposite direction: 'But the central content of his message is not the future coming of Christ but his incarnation, death, and resurrection.'¹ Our study has shown that the impression that future eschatology is insignificant in Galatians is a misreading, which in turn questions Marshall's claim about the 'centre' of Paul's gospel.

This is not, of course, a call to discard the cross of Christ and posit instead his *parousia* as the real centre of his gospel. Such a step would cause even more disastrous distortion of Paul's gospel which *is* about 'Christ and Him crucified' (1 Cor 2:2). The real problem rather seems to be the tendency to treat these themes (christology, eschatology) as independent theological motifs which occupy certain designated places in Paul's thought, often competing against each other for the place of honour in his mental universe. There is also the unfortunate tendency to treat

¹ Marshall, 'Eschatology' (1997) 49. Similarly, Baird, 'Eschatology' (1971) 314-27.

Paul's future eschatological language as a mere motivating tactic in Paul's ethical discourse.

However, driving an artificial wedge between the cross and the *parousia* or highlighting one at the cost of the other does more to obscure Paul's thought than to clarify it. For Paul both 'Christ and Him crucified' and 'the Day of Christ' are like pillars which sustain the whole structure of his gospel together, and without either one of which the other simply loses its meaning. Paul's future eschatological perspective cannot be reduced to an isolated motif which may be relativized or even sacrificed according to situational exigencies. On the contrary, for Paul the coming of Christ forms an unavoidable goal of the present life, without which the crucifixion, indispensable as it may be, would end up being an aborted attempt on God's side to save His people. In Galatians, as we saw in our study, the urgent situation forced Paul to speak more of the present, explicating its meaning in the light of the Christ event in the past and the work of the Spirit in the present. Yet, he does all this with a clear view to bringing out the meaning of the present crisis for the Galatians' quest for final salvation which is, after all, the ultimate purpose of their coming to Christ. In other words, the observation that future eschatology is not a *topic* in a letter should not turn into the claim that it therefore lacks a future eschatological *perspective*. If it is near-sighted to say that in First Thessalonians Paul completely neglects the cross and considers Christ solely in terms of his future *parousia*, we should take equal care not to commit the opposite but equally fatal mistake. The interpreter's task is to try to understand how Paul carried out his ministry and worked out his theology between these two horizons, that is, in the light of Christ who was crucified, is present among his people in the Spirit, and is to come to bring everything to its due completion.

The place of ethics in Paul's gospel

Another crucial corollary of Paul's future eschatological perspective is the importance of ethics in Paul's gospel. We have claimed that Paul perceives deviation from the pattern of faith and love rather than circumcision itself as the essence of the Galatian apostasy. In line with this we have also argued that Paul develops an extensive theological argument with a view to dealing with this eminently practical problem, which becomes explicit in the later part of the letter. Thus, according to our suggestion, what needs to be explained is not the existence of the ethical sections at the end of the letter but how Paul uses extensive theological argument to back his call for a return from apostasy to the truth of faith and love. Focusing mainly on eschatology, our treatment of ethics has been inevitably brief (chapter eight), but even our cursory discussion has shown that ethics, far from being a mere implication of Paul's gospel proper, is in fact at the heart of what Paul calls 'the truth of the gospel'.

Hence our reading of Galatians poses a serious question to the normal way of construing the structure of Paul's gospel in terms of 'theology' and 'ethics'. No one would deny the importance of ethics in Paul's gospel but the fact that we describe Paul in the dual terms of theology (doctrine) and ethics seems to show a persistent assumption that the former is more crucial than the latter. An inescapable result of this is that while Paul's own moral directives are very simple and straightforward, scholarly exposition of them tends to be too 'theoretical' and 'dialectical' for people with common sense to follow.²

² Cf. Stendahl, *Paul* (1976) 97: 'Learned persons have even become accustomed of late to speaking about "dialectic"- a method which can be dangerous because it could be one of those subtle ways in which words neutralize one another, although theologians claim rather that they seek a creative tension between the words'.

A partial explanation of this tendency seems to be found in confusing the theological logic of indicative-imperative with the eschatological logic of imperative-future salvation.³ For example, much scholarly resistance to acknowledging the explicitly conditional nature of Paul's ethical imperative is motivated by the desire to preserve the precedence of indicative over imperative. This is a legitimate concern since there is no denying that God's indicative precedes human obedience. This does not mean, however, that the latter can be subsumed under the shadow of the former. The Spirit does not obviate the necessity of human obedience for receiving God's ultimate indicative (final salvation). Some would call it 'evidence' instead of 'condition' but a different name does not make any practical difference since the indicative-imperative dynamics is *by no means* an automatic process but requires genuine *human effort*. And in most cases Paul's moral exhortation is not motivated by the theological intention of showing the effectiveness of the 'indicative', which is assumed to be obvious, but by the eminently practical and pastoral purposes of keeping his Gentile converts vigilant by pressing on them the absolute necessity of proper conduct for 'inheriting the kingdom of God'.

The Galatian eschatology and Pauline chronology

Another implication of our study concerns the chronology of Paul's writings. Many interpreters think that the allegedly strong emphasis on the present phase of salvation in Galatians forms a stark contrast with the future eschatology of First Thessalonians, and take it as evidence for the relatively late date of Galatians. Our thesis that Galatians shows a future eschatological perspective brings this sort of argument to the ground. Galatians does not show a realized eschatological perspective, and therefore,

³ This is similar to the distinction between 'warrant/telos' and 'sanction' discussed in Keck,

one cannot attribute it to a later date for that reason. If we employ the same logic, the future eschatological outlook of Galatians, which is similar to that of First Thessalonians, supports the view that these two writings belong to the same (early) period of Paul's writing career.

Ultimately, however, it begs the question to draw a conclusion about Pauline chronology from his theology since it already *assumes* a sort of development in Paul's eschatological thinking, presumably from a future eschatology to a more realized one. Yet this development is precisely the point that is yet to be demonstrated.⁴ The only point we can make at this point is that it is wrong to use the allegedly realized eschatological viewpoint in Galatians as evidence for the late date of its writing.

Justification and the development of Paul's thought

Our thesis of future eschatological justification in Galatians also has significant implications for Paul's view of justification in general. For one thing, the usual custom of taking the data in Romans ('righteousness of God' and 'justification of the ungodly') as the starting point of discussion with Galatians as a supplement will not do since Paul clearly uses the concept in different ways in both letters. If our thesis is correct, we have to posit certain change from future eschatological doctrine of justification in Galatians and a more complicated one in Romans in which both the present and future justification occur side by side. This recognition requires a more thorough investigation into the precise thrust of Paul's justification language in both letters, especially in Galatians.

'Rethinking' (1996) 3-16.

⁴ Cf. The attempt of Dodd to trace such a development in 'The Mind of Paul: I' (1933) and 'The Mind of Paul: II' (1934) and the critique by Lowe, 'Examination' (1941).

Secondly, our thesis also has a crucial bearing on the origin of Paul's doctrine of justification. Many scholars, assuming that Paul from the beginning considers justification as a present gift, suggests that Paul first gained this insight into 'justification of the ungodly' from his encounter with the Risen Christ on the Damascus road which is understood as his own experience of God's justifying grace. That Paul still considers justification as an end-time gift in Galatians indicates that this speculation is an unlikely one. This may explain the lack in Galatians of such themes as the present revelation of 'righteousness of God' and 'justification of the ungodly'. This also seems to explain the surprising failure on Paul's side to connect his conversion/call with justification, despite his emphasis on both themes. With justification still being an end-time gift, it certainly did not occur to Paul to describe the 'revelation of His Son in me' (1:16) as a personal example of present justification.

Thirdly, does this mean that Paul's thought about justification developed? Our thesis makes it clear that Paul uses the *dik*-words in different ways in each letter. The question then is whether this change of definition also involves a change in his theology. The decision is not an easy one, but in our opinion it is not necessarily the case since change in words does not always involve change in thought structure itself. In Galatians the issue at hand is justification, a term which Paul uses to refer to final salvation (eternal life). That this future justification (final salvation) happens to be the immediate issue, of course, does not mean that Paul attributes no significance at all to the 'getting in'. On the contrary, it is not difficult to see that even in Galatians it does remain determinative. It is just that Paul calls it by different -names such as redemption, sonship and freedom. On the other hand, in Romans Paul uses the term 'justification' to describe the initial 'getting in', and thereby gives a new twist to the meaning of the word. Again, however, this change in meaning does not indicate that

Paul now considers 'getting in' as the major point of salvation and thereby relativizes the importance of final salvation. A comparison of both letters tells us that despite Paul's flexible use of the term justification, the overall structure of Paul's thought remains remarkably consistent. The decisiveness of 'getting in' is obvious in both letters but so is the absolute necessity of 'being led by the Spirit' which is the precondition of final salvation. The terminology may change but the reality his language tries to capture seems to remain consistent.

This brings our study to an end. Our main thesis has been that, contrary to the widely held view, Paul's argument in Galatians shows a clearly future eschatological perspective. How cogent our thesis is, of course, for the readers to decide. However the readers may decide about our thesis as a whole, it is our hope that those questions and answers proposed in this study will challenge other students of Paul to read Paul's argument in Galatian in a different light, and thereby contribute to a better understanding of Galatians as well as of Paul's gospel as a whole.

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